SHE GOES TO WAR

RUPERT HUGHES

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SHE GOES TO WAR

A United Artists Picture. *She Goes to War.*

TOM PIKE (JOHN HOLLAND) MODEST, BRAVE, AN AMERICAN SOLDIER.

SHE GOES TO WAR

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

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THE PATENT LEATHER KID

ILLUSTRATED WITH SCENES FROM THE UNITED ARTISTS PHOTOPLAY
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She Goes To War

CHAPTER I

The butler stepped hastily through the moon-blued white columns of the portico and beckoned. He looked back into the high hall and saw the young girl running down the great stairway.

He put his fingers to his lips and whistled.

The dozing chauffeur woke, stared. The butler wigwagged excitedly. The gears snarled, the burly roadster bucked, shot to the foot of the steps, stopped short.

The chauffeur was hardly out before a young woman in the scant costume called full evening dress, with a coat flying out like a pair of wings, dashed from the house. Her heels were going rat-a-tat-a-tat down the steps as she mumbled:

" 'Night!"

"Good night, Miss Joan," said the butler.

"Even'n'!"

"Good evening, Miss Joan," said the chauffeur.

She was already at the wheel and had the car started before he could scramble in. He went backward as she swirled the monster around the driveway.

He had the door closed just in time to save it from being ripped off by the gateway. Low branches of a tree switched his face as she glanced at the clock on the dash and said something like "Hell!" He thought as much.

She gave a little greased lightning to the car on the sleek highway, and the speedometer arrow shivered nervously between sixty and seventy. The chauffeur was even more nervous. As they pierced a dark wood, she mumbled:

"Going to the war?"

"Got a mother—wife—three KIDS!"

The last word was jolted up into the capitals as the right wheels whooped over an unseen bump. They slashed across a narrow bridge so close to the granite abutment that he gasped:

"Maybe I'd better go to the war."

She got the point, and threw in more velocity as her comment. She suddenly braked down to a tame forty when they drew into the village and the chauffeur shot forward as if to dive headfirst through the windshield.

Out of the dark appeared a squad of soldiers, singing, arm-in-arm. The song was quenched

and they sought cover with an agility that showed the value of their studies at the training camp.

In the town-square, a fragment of the Salvation Army was spread out beyond the curb. As Joan swooped past, the trombonist seemed to swallow most of the tube. She grazed the skirts of the contralto and a tambourine rattled with terror. The other musician drew in a bass-drum that looked like an alderman's abdomen. Having contributed her mite to the cause by throwing the fear of God into a number of wayfarers, Joan dropped to a snail's pace to avoid erasing a mangy pup that could not make up its mind which way to go.

Once past the pup and through the village, she gave her chauffeur more cause to imagine how much safer he would be in France. But as she drew near to the Country Club, lighted up and at a distance resembling a candy cottage on a wedding cake, she was checked by the throng of other cars hurrying toward the community's farewell to Chesham's own company of soldiers, entraining in the morning for France via a big assembly camp.

Joan hated to drive slowly anywhere and so did her car. They were used to letting pedestrians fend for themselves. Though the highways about the Club were thick with motors,

she managed to steal the road from most of them by clever work and outrageous impudence.

She went into the curved driveway at such speed that the chauffeur closed his eyes. So he did not see what happened to big Tom Pike, who had parked his car at a distance and was escorting his very small mother afoot to the club house. He was in his new uniform and she was in her old one. He knew all about automobiles and she only one thing—that they are murderous.

She shrieked and froze with terror as the headlights of Joan's plunging demon blinded her. Tom lifted her lightly and set her on the steps in time to have followed her to safety if he had wanted to. But he preferred to stand stock still in angry calm.

Joan, assuming that everybody had sense enough to get out of her way, failed to jam down her brakes until the collision bar had struck Tom Pike's knee. It staggered him a little, but he received it like a statue.

Joan called around the windshield in a fury: "What the—why the——"

His only answer was a glare of such contemptuous hatred that she resorted to snobbery as her only remaining weapon. She turned

the wheel over to the chauffeur and stepped out, with a flippant:

"Well, well! it's Tom Pike, the garage boy —and all dressed up! What are you, an Admiral?"

He did not answer that, either. As the chauffeur backed and twisted the car and ran it to some distant parking space, Joan inspected Tom more closely, and having learned something about insignia of late, taunted him further:

"A first lieutenant. You frighten me."

She frightened him so that he wanted to knock her down with his fist, or better yet, to cut her in two with a slash of repartee. But the best he could do was to turn away from her, seize his mother by the tiny point of her elbow, and hoist her up the steps.

As Joan smiled at the success of her ridicule, half-a-dozen young men of her acquaintance descended on her to wrangle her for the first dance. Most of them were in uniform. Some of the smartest and richest wore the ill-fitting garb of privates, one was a corporal, and another a second lieutenant. Since this last had had his clothes made for him, they fitted him, and Joan selected him for the first dance.

Democracy was suddenly the fashion. It had

the charm of everything that is novel, by reason of genuine newness or by a revival of something old and forgotten.

The realm about Chesham conformed to the type of American rural life in the East. A central village of the humblest sort served as the hub of a vast wheel of estates where people of wealth played country gentry, pretending to be farmers and leaving agriculture to the hirelings while they admired the landscape and traversed it in automobiles or followed hounds across it or in winter swooped across the snow on skis.

The townspeople were grocers, bakers, hardware, feed and grain merchants, plumbers, garage men, laundresses and purveyors to the rich or to the poor that hung about them. The rich and the poor mingled on a friendly basis so long as the poor realized that the graciousness of the rich was pure condescension and repaid it with lower prices than were charged in the city. In short, Chesham did its little best to be as feudal as American conditions permit.

When the World War broke and the call came for the nation to reveal and exploit its manpower, Chesham did as well as could be expected. Rich and poor alike volunteered in the usual proportions, or gave good excuses for waiting until the draught act should annul all

excuses. In Chesham as elsewhere, the nation also revealed its woman-power.

Never was there a war in which women took so large a part. Those who could not sacrifice themselves to the dirty work and the drudgery, or the pretty work and the flummery wanted to share the dangers with the men.

A hundred thousand Joans of Arc arose overnight and offered to lead the way to battle. And that caused no end of difficulty since American men had been so long in the habit of letting the women have everything they wanted that it was hard to deny them the privilege of sleeping in the muddy trenches under the ministrations of cooties and shrapnel.

The Chesham Country Club was one of the most aristocratic in the whole republic. Its women were as high-spirited as any and, having complained of the difficulty of keeping servants that could serve, decided that the noblest work of woman was to serve.

Chesham, like the rest of the country, was stirred to its depths by a great desire to be democratic, to live and die for democracy. There would soon be a phrase, accepted by nearly everybody at home, that the soldiers were fighting "to make the world safe for democracy." The soldiers themselves were almost the only ones who disbelieved this or

were angered by it. In Chesham it was a watchword that kindled a frenzy of enthusiasm.

Once a year the King of England dances with the palace servants. Once a year the King of Spain gets down on his hunkers and washes the feet of certain carefully selected and sterilized beggars. Such ceremonies are well understood and there is no record of any chambermaid asking the English King to dance with her the day after the annual affair, or of any Spanish beggar offering his feet to His Majesty to scrub on any other occasion.

But the war was on for a long run and democracy must be professed indefinitely. It was the only thing in style, except bravery and self-sacrifice, and Chesham never yet had lagged behind the van in doing what was smart.

The villagers had for years kept up a little separate company of a scattered National Guard regiment. The officers held it together by imploring recruits, and committing patriotic perjury whenever it was necessary to save the company from being disbanded for lack of attendance.

When the war broke, the ridiculous little organization became the pride of the town. Its enlarged quota was quickly filled and there was a waiting list for every one of the positions as officer.

Tom Pike, who had worked up to the difficult post of first sergeant, had been elected first lieutenant to replace a man whose wife, mother, and three children forbade him to leave them to starve. Tom was not quite sure how his own mother would be fed, but she promised him that she would get along. The second lieutenancy was secured by Percy Van Ruyper, who paid for it by buying some much-needed equipment. And so the company was ready for camp at an early date, and the Country Club meekly begged permission to receive as honored guests persons who had never before been allowed to enter the grounds except to build additions, deliver supplies or repair the plumbing.

Among all the snobs in Chesham, Joan Morgan was probably the snobbiest. She was as kind to her servants and the tradespeople as she was to her horses and dogs—and would have been equally amazed to see them asking to sit at table with her or take her out to dance.

For such a man as Tom Pike, it was impossible to comprehend such a girl as Joan. He was bound to misunderstand her cordiality, when she stopped at his garage for gas or oil or stood by his side talking learnedly of the ailments of a sick engine. He was quite as proud and haughty in his way as she in hers.

He was quite properly convinced that a good mechanic is as good as anybody, not one day in the week, or during a war only, but all the year around.

He had been scorched by Joan's warm beauty and deceived by her careless informality with him. He knew he was as good as she was and he thought she knew it too. He did not understand that the more aristocratic one is the more superior one can be, and usually is, to pretentious pomposity.

There was no other girl in town who was so free of her language, so frank in her talk and so indifferent to her postures as Joan Morgan. She said "Please!" and "Thank you!" to her servants and to others who waited on her, but that was only politeness. She never thought of drawing social lines and putting people in their places, because she assumed that they knew their places and recognized that she was surrounded by a sacred circle of superiority.

Joan's snobbery never showed itself plainer than at a time when the rest of the aristocracy was standing on its head trying to show how democratic it could be. Most of the snobs who were struggling to be aristocratic had been only pretending all the time. Some of them

were really democratic at heart but had never dared to show it for fear of criticism.

When Joan reached the club house and accepted Lieutenant Percy Van Ruyper's invitation to the dance, she found herself jostled by lads whom she recognized as drivers of trucks, hostlers about the stables, clerks in the village stores, the ticket agent at the station, hired men about the farm and the man who hustled the trunks on and off the train.

She was mortally offended and a trifle sickened. She tried to remind herself that these poor souls were all heroes ennobled by their bravery and consecrated by their readiness to die for the republic. She was willing to crown them with laurels and revere them as saints, but dancing with them was another thing yet. She tried to force herself not to be a silly idiot, and above all, not to make herself conspicuous, but her stomach regarded the affair as a sort of Channel crossing. She had no theories of class-distinction and despised some of her own relations more than anybody else. She had no idea that it was degrading to be in trade, and she accepted the tradespeople as inferiors only because they fawned on her and her people for the sake of their custom. But she could not, all of a sudden, fawn on them.

She felt so ill at ease that she could not dance. She blamed the music and dragged the protecting Percy from the floor on a pretext that she was thirsty. He led her to the punchbowl. Presiding over the cut glass bathtubs of lemonade were the grandest ladies in the county, trying to give away their wares as eagerly as farmwives at a fair trying to sell turnips and cabbages. Others were doing their utmost to stuff sandwiches and cakes into capacious soldiers whom they would not have permitted to wait on them a month ago.

Joan distrusted the bad acting in this amateur show and she could not applaud it or play the part thrust into her hand. She decided that she was not thirsty and turned with relief to greet an old friend of hers, a somewhat eccentric girl who had spent a deal of time away —abroad, Joan had supposed. Dorcas was dressed now as a Red Cross nurse, probably for a pageant or something.

Joan hailed her now: "H'lo, Dorcas! haven't seen you for ages. What you all dolled up for?"

"Going to France."

"Already?"

There was a touch of excusable pride in Dorcas' answer: "The Red Cross is always ready to go anywhere at any time."

Joan lifted her eyebrows at the boast, but felt at once a keen impulse to hurry across to France: "I believe I'll go along with you, if you don't mind. The uniform is most becoming. I never thought you were exactly beautiful before, but you're the stunningest thing I ever saw in that get-up. How can I get one?"

"By taking a course for three years."

"My God! the war will be over by that time."

"I hope so."

"Did you study three years?"

"Yes. I didn't expect to go to France, but I wanted to make myself useful somehow."

"I wish to the Lord, I'd known about it. I'm crazy to get into this awful mess somewhere."

"The Red Cross can use you right away for a thousand things, but not as a nurse, of course. To be a trained nurse, you've got to be—trained. But the Red Cross needs thousands of workers if they're willing to work."

More in self-defense than in pique, the whimsical Joan passed up the suggestion: "I don't think I'd care for nursing. I want to fight. I could always whip all the boys I knew, and run faster. I'm a dead shot with a pistol or a shotgun. Why can't I fight?"

"Why not?" said Dorcas, whose training had taught her that argument is more likely

to make well people ill than ill people well.

The floor manager howled: "The next will be a Paul Jones!"

Joan always hated the promiscuity of the Paul Jones even in her own crowd. She refused half-a-dozen prayers to dance, but her fat old Uncle Cornelius simply dragged her in. She could not hurt his feelings though she knew he would not be equally tender of her tender toes.

The band struck up. After a moment or two of hopping about with her wheezy uncle, a great circle was formed. All joined hands. Then, at command, the Grand-right-and-left began. She had to touch palms with Tom, Dick and Harry—Tom being Pike. The whistle blew and she was lucky enough to be near Van Ruyper. She pleaded:

"Please dance me off the floor, Percy, and leave me."

"I can't—I've got a gal in there and you've got a man. You'll have to play the game tonight."

He dragged her back into the circle when it formed again, and once more she wove her way among the sweaty-handed soldiers. The whistle blew as she was leaving Tom Pike, her left hand just about to slip from his huge fist. He had been paying little heed to the passers-

by and he drew her back and put his arm about her before he realized who she was.

There was a difficult instant for both of them. He would have been glad to cast her off, but he dared not. For her to refuse to dance with him would give him more importance than he deserved. Seeing that he was half-paralyzed, she snapped:

"Well, don't you want to dance with me, Mr. First Lieutenant?"

"God, yes?" he gasped, and could have bitten his tongue off with rage.

He put his arms about her as if she were a red hot stove. But he found that she was not so warm as all that, and yet not cold—anger flushed her. He gathered her in and resolved to show her how well he could dance. She was surprised at his rhythmic sense. She had to show him that she was no cow. The ragtime music was too crazy to permit anything reasonable. It was anarchy and she laughed at her prejudices for the nonce.

Tom pressed her close. She pressed away. He groaned. He could not tell whether he wanted to break every bone in her body or propose an elopement. They danced in mutual wrath to such amorous music that she felt it best to talk of something less compromising than the implications of the music. She

could think of nothing more brilliant than:

"So you're on your way to France?"

"I hope so—but there's a long stay in camp first."

"Then I'll be there before you."

"You going to France?"

"Of course. Everybody is."

"What could you do in France?"

He was asking merely for information, but a quirk of the music threw into his tone what she took for contempt; she answered stoutly:

"Drive an ambulance—or an ammunition truck, fight, shoot——"

"That's a man's job. A woman's place is the home."

"What a brilliant remark! Did you just think it up all by yourself?"

He had meant to imply that she was too precious, too exquisite to be risked in the war-zone, but he lacked the graces of compliment and found that he had blundered again. His anger at his own awkwardness she interpreted as insolence. He made a bad matter worse by floundering:

"You'd only get in the way and interfere with the soldiers."

His thought was graceful; he meant that it would be hard for soldiers to keep their minds on the battle while she was near, but

his flattery fell with the thud of an insult:

Joan was furious and she snapped: "Don't let me interfere with you, Mr. Pike. I think I'll not dance any more."

Just then the belated whistle blew, and some dancing corporal taking a last whirl hooked his heel around Tom's shin and threw him off his balance. He careened into a flying shoulder and was flung heavily to the floor.

In spite of all he could do he carried Joan with him and in his frantic efforts to save her flung her on her back and landed on all fours alongside her.

Her head hit the floor and her bobbed hair afforded no cushion. The nasty crack on the skull and a bruise on one elbow did not improve her temper. She could have throttled Tom Pike to death cheerfully if she could have reached him. He could have killed himself to escape his remorse, and was so frantic with confusion that his agony took the form of a grimace that resembled a smile. He was nearer sobbing than laughing, but his emotion sounded like laughter and he used that versatile word "funny," which meant to him as to countless others, "strange, incredible, bewildering, baffling."

"Gee, that was funny!" he said, and scrambling to his feet lifted Joan to hers as easily

as he had tossed his mother to the steps when Joan's car frightened her.

This was the final sin. Joan could never endure to have a man lift her. She resented the assertion of superior strength. The feeling of helplessness infuriated her. Then the imbecile attempted to brush off her dusty skirt and as he slapped at it, she had to wring her hands to keep from slapping him down.

She tried her best to laugh at the ridiculous accident, but she felt more like crying. And she would rather have died than cried. She was almost a maniac with a dozen angers at once, and when Tom Pike faltered:

"I'm so sorry! Can you ever forgive me?"

"No!" She walked off the floor. A dozen matrons and maids surrounded her with consolation or concealed exultation, knowing from experience that a woman would much rather fall secretly than publicly. Joan was wrathful enough to groan:

"That's what one gets for dancing with a gang of muckers. I deserve it."

Because she wanted to go home, she insisted on staying; but she kept aloof from the dance floor, sullen in a black rage, forcing a miserable pretense of indifference to a peculiarly tormenting humiliation.

When she abandoned Tom, he stood rigid

and gaping, feeling a tingling emptiness in the arms where Miss Morgan had almost unbelievably rested for a while. The circling dancers capered about him. Another grand-right-and-left was finished, but he did not come back to life until one of the girls in town—a clerk in the drygoods store, Molly Crawford—seeing that she was about to fall into the arms of Joan's puffy uncle, ducked him, ran to Tom and jounced him furiously about the room. Molly was giggling over Joan's disaster:

"I hope you threw her down a-purpose. She had it comin' to her."

Tom did not hear Molly's comments. He was wishing that he had the courage to dive through a window and disappear. He would have felt much obliged to Percy Van Ruyper if he had obeyed Joan's command. For when Percy tried vainly to shake Joan out of her wrath, and pleaded: "Wow, but you're glum! Can't I do anything to cheer you up?" Joan answered:

"Yes, go throw that unspeakable Tom Pike out of here."

"Good Lord!" Percy stammered. "He's my superior officer."

Times had topsy-turvied indeed, when a Percy Van Ruyper admitted his inferiority to a Tom Pike.

CHAPTER II

Toward the end of the evening the two factions of the village were pretty well worn out with trying to mix. Like oil and water they mingled when violently shaken but on coming to a repose, returned to their separation. The emulsion would not last at rest. The fashionables were drawn together for the dance or conversation. The villagers were happy in clusters of their own sort.

Joan was surrounded by the soldiers who were aristocrats, Van Ruyper, a sergeant or two, some corporals and a few privates, wretchedly ill at ease in their machine-made misfits.

She promised to go with them to France and be a mother to them as well as a fellow soldier. Whether her patriotism were more love of self or of country, she was aflame with eagerness to do her bit. She was afraid neither of unwomanliness nor of any other danger.

Van Ruyper and his friends organized themselves into her bodyguard and elected her their honorary colonel. Colonel Joan invited them

to ride back to Camp in her roadster. They accepted with delight, piled in on top of the chauffeur, and made a sardine can of the rumble seat.

About the same time Tom Pike, who had been devouring Joan with a rage of love and hate, noted that his mother had fallen asleep and woke her to take her home. As he steered her drowsy feet out of the club house, he saw Joan in her car, almost submerged in soldiers, —all of them snobs.

He ignored them conspicuously as he dogged down the steps, but once more as he walked toward his car he had to shift his mother quickly out of the way when Joan whizzed by. She was tempted to run him down indeed this time, and he saved himself by a quick leap to the grass.

He glared after her, forgot his mother, and damned Joan up and down until his mother gasped:

"Tom, Tom, such language!"

"Excuse me, mamma," he growled, wondering at Joan's curious gift for stirring him to strange frenzies.

After a bloodcurdling dash to the company quarters, Joan dumped her freight of soldiers, surprised to be alive. They aligned themselves and saluted their colonel as she went home at

breakneck speed, reducing her chauffeur almost to a state of prayer. When she bade him good night, she told him that he had better be looking for another job as she was going to the war at once. His only remark was:

"God save the poor Germans!"

Joan reached her bedroom in no mood for sleep. As she undressed she scanned the pages of a magazine filled with war. Everything was war. She came across a picture of the Russian Women's Battalion of Death and stared in fascinated envy at a portrait of the bulky commander, Maria Botchkareva.

With one stocking off and one stocking on, Joan shivered in her chemise as she read how the stout-hearted Slavic women organized, and fought alongside the men, sharing their hardships and the furies of combat. She felt herself warming to conflict. A uniform seemed mystically to enclose her form. Rough fabrics replaced the crinkly silk.

She was used to wearing breeches and boots. She had often shot ducks from a blind. She was expert with a pistol. She could ride a horse to death, and she was strong and of good wind, afraid of nobody. She crept into her bed and wished it were a blanket on a battlefield.

Before she knew that she had fallen asleep,

Germans sprang from the walls. Holding up an imaginary pistol she emptied her forefinger of lethal bullets. At every shot a foeman fell. She caught an invisible trench knife from her puttee top and laid about her with such success that she soon had a parapet of slain enemies in front of her.

She saw a mysterious hero whose face was hidden in a gas mask, fighting desperately outside the lines. He was backing toward her with a machine gun spitting and mowing down platoons of Germans as if they were wheat and his weapon a scythe. But more took their places and he fell wounded at her feet. She bestrode his body to defend it, and drove off a whole army.

She knelt by the unconscious hero and tried to remove the mask so that she could gaze on his face, knowing that he was a heaven-sent lover. But she was interrupted by Foch, Haig, Petain and other generals, who insisted on pinning medals on her. At length she waved them away impatiently and tore off the ugly gas-mask, disclosing the face of her man of men.

To her disgust it was Tom Pike.

She flung the body from her and woke up to find herself asleep. She sighed to find herself in bed, vowed that she would make haste to France, and sealed the vow with a yawn.

The daybreak woke her with a spear of light. She sat up startled as if she had been called. She went to the window and looked out on the waking landscape. In the hollows, mists were steaming as if from altar fire.

Far across the dawn-stained ridges of many hills she could just see the tops of a few tents. She thought she could hear a bugle crying, "I can't get 'em up. I can't getemupicantgetemup in the morn-ing!"

A wave of bugle calls was just preceding the sun from the Atlantic to the Pacific seas. All about the continent from Maine to Oregon and California to Florida, men were clustered in camps making ready to defend their liberty against the helmeted ambition of the Prussian King who claimed to take his crown, not from parliaments nor from people but from God Himself.

For two years America had gazed from afar while Europe was made one slaughter house and all the oceans were filled with enemies that stabbed from beneath the waters. Two years had passed and the ambition of that zealot was not yet quelled. It grew; it threatened America; it made "ruthlessness" its motto.

In later years cooler judgments would find that the war was not so simple as it looked to the people it devastated. They would debate

the problem of its origins calmly, find them obscure, complex, the total of a thousand causes. They would debate the question of guilt and divide it variously, but no longer heap it all on the head of one man or one nation.

The meteorologist can see that storms are not the fault of the sky, that the sky is helpless in its own throes, and that the earth contributes its full share to the tempest. But to the wayfarer who sees the black billows rolling across the blue heavens, feels the arrows of the cold rain come down and sees the lightning leap apparently from the thunderheads, the sky is the source of the evil.

So to nearly all the Americans of 1918, the war was the creation of one man, who changed his cheerful lyric people into Huns and drove them across peaceful Belgium, slicing off women's breasts and the pleading hands of children, trampling into the bloody soil the brave little regiments of England, suddenly recalled to Americans as brothers of the Anglo-Saxon blood, and the fiery heroes of France, suddenly remembered as the savior of America.

The United States concentrated all the blame on the Kaiser, who had dealt the first blow, killed the first Belgian soldier, and justified all the preparations that other countries had made against his long brandished mailed fist. To

that people of that day the enemies of Germany were found guilty of too little preparedness, not too much.

The sweet songs of Germany, the noble music took on a cursedness. The laughter awakened by the comedians who bandied broken English was turned to loathing. To have a German name was to be already accused of treason and inhumanity. The wildest lies were sanctified. The plainest facts were unmentionable. The historians of another day could go over the records and array the true truths, but the people of that time were making history, not analyzing it.

To Joan, as to the rest of her people, the Kaiser was Satan incarnate. She had no especial patriotism. She had rather looked down on her country people. Travel and study abroad had made her contemptuous of American crudities and jingoisms. But she abhorred the Kaiser and wanted to help destroy him and his fellow fiends.

Her nostrils curled with wrath as she remembered what the Kaiser had said to women. He had set the limits of their world, sneered at their pretensions to live their own lives. He had told them that their only duties were to cultivate "Kaiser, Kirk, Kitchen, and Kiddies"—*Kaiser, Kirche, Küche, Kinder.*

Joan took this as a personal insult to herself. She had no interest in any of his four K's. Her ambition was to add another, KRIEG.

There were numberless men in America who were of the Kaiser's opinion and ridiculed the high ideals of womankind. Tom Pike had mouthed the hateful phrase that locked the door on women's hopes:

"A woman's place is the home."

Now was the time to answer them once for all. In Europe the women had achieved miracles of bravery and had shrunk from no task in France or at home. They pushed up to the front to nurse the shattered men, they ploughed the fields, risked their lives in the munitions plants, buried themselves in the smut and grease of the repairshop. They were everywhere where they could be of use.

American women must do as much and more, for they had been given more freedom and more trust.

Standing by her window in a filmy gown, glowing and reddened in the fire from the Eastern horizon, Joan had the look and the exaltation of a classic priestess. She was for the moment all American womanhood, and the narrow realm beneath her eyes was America. It was not patriotism that she felt so much as

pride. Her eagerness was to demolish rather than defend. Yet her very wrath was something more heroic than she had ever felt before.

For only a moment was she permitted to be poetry. Then her skin turned to gooseflesh under the gauze whipped by a morning wind. Her bare feet chilled on the floor. She thought almost aloud, "You damned fool, you'll catch your death of cold, and end yourself before you begin."

She yawned as she stumbled back to her bed and, falling into it, drew the covers over her and was instantly gone from this world.

That was Joan. Her ecstasies and her lofty moods were fiercely real but brief. She went up like a rocket flaming but came down like the stick charred and cold.

CHAPTER III

When she woke hours later she realized that the train would soon be carrying the soldiers away from the town. She ran to the window. The distant tents had been struck and bundled no doubt into trucks.

She flashed through her tub, gulped her coffee, put most of her grapefruit into her eye, thrust into her clothes, and darted from her room.

The butler stepped hastily through the sun-gilded white columns of the portico and beckoned, put his fingers to his lips and whistled.

The dozing chauffeur woke. The butler wig-wagged. The burly roadster shot to the foot of the steps. A dazzling girl in a scant costume dashed from the house, her heels going rat-a-tat on the steps as she cried:

" 'Morn'!"

"Good morning, Miss Joan!"

" 'Morn'!"

"Good morning, Miss Joan."

He got the door closed again in time. The

low branches of the tree switched his white face. The speedometer arrow quaked as it climbed. Again she missed the granite abutment—also a number of farm wagons and automobiles.

The village streets were nearly empty. Even the Salvation Army was at the station with the rest of the populace. The ladies of the town and of the country club were waiting at long tables loaded with sandwiches, fried chicken, pop bottles.

Joan reached the edge of the throng just as the company marched in from its abandoned camp. The bugle shouted, fifes were hilarious, drums purred and thumped, and the echoes gave the best imitation they could. The troops came into view, looking as glorious as possible in spite of the dogs and the boys and girls scampering along both flanks.

The soldiers pretended not to see their families and neighbors. Their eyes saw nothing nearer than France—or at least Hoboken. The captain steered the long column up alongside the waiting, panting special train on the side track. Then he shrieked a lot of impressive gibberish ending in "Halt!" and the long winding column was a long straight line with rifles coming down as if they were being pulled out of the air.

Still, the soldiers had apparently not discovered that they were being observed or that they had ever met any of the observers. There was further ritual and all the baggage was off their backs and on the ground.

The mothers, fathers, wives, sisters, brothers, children, relations, employers, servants, strangers all agreed that nothing was ever so beautiful or so worth while as war and soldiers. All music was cheap but march-music. All business was contemptible but fighting. All emotions were paltry but patriotism.

Then the army disbanded and became just a lot of young fellows rushing here and there to find the people they wanted to talk to most.

Suddenly a cloud quenched all the radiance. Every one of these blithe lads was going to a far-off place overseas where the killing of mothers' sons was the only industry, where disease and wounds and hunger and hate, weariness, terror and lice and mud were to be the faithful companions of these boys.

A knife went into every heart. A mortal fear filled every throat with an unbearable ache. Arms that clenched bodies felt that they wrestled with death. Eyes were wrung with a dry ferocity as they strove to fill themselves with visions against the dreary numberless days and nights when these soldiers would see

nothing dear or tender before them, nor these who stayed at home anything they longed to see. And war was all at once only ugliness, cruelty, irreparable loss and savage waste.

Such were the thoughts that everybody thought and nobody uttered. The grief was so immense and ineffable that only silly things were spoken, stupid jokes, platitudes, homely nonsense. People giggled who wanted to scream. Men hemmed and hawed who wanted to sob.

Mothers said, "Don't get your feet wet, honey." Wives whimpered, "You write me now whenever you can." Children whined, "Bring me a helmet." Many humorists were inspired to say, "Kiss Kaiser Bill for me," or "Send me a postcard from Berlin and just say, 'Havin' a fine time, wisht you was here.' "

Joan was troubled with feelings she had never known before. It seemed impossible that she should be left behind here with the farmers' wives and the washwomen. Her bodyguard surrounded her and called her "Colonel" and told her they would be expecting her. But they could not spend more than a few words on her. They had their own womenfolk, and must exchange futile nothings until the train marched.

Joan was left to herself at last, and studied the crowd, wishing that she had a brother, a

husband, or a son to tell goodby. Then she saw what the forlorn sisters, wives and mothers were enduring in the hot sun that wilted their finery and unstrung their hair.

She recognized Tom Pike's mother as the little thing she had almost run over twice the night before. Catching a glimpse of her face, puckered as if she had pulled the drawstrings too tight, while she twitched at the uniform of the big child alongside, Joan wondered if she would not have done the woman a favor if she had run over her. She would have saved the pitiful little thing a woeful amount of pain.

Joan could not hate Tom Pike this morning. He was as awkward with his mother as he had been with her, and that put a different light somehow on the blundering stupidity of his bad manners. She saw on his face as he looked down and patted his mother's back the very sickly grin that he had worn when he told Joan how "funny" it was when he sprawled on the dance floor with her. So that look on his face must be the last anguish with him.

When the captain nudged him and said, "Fall your men in, we're on our way!" Tom saluted, then hoisted his mother to his high head and crushed her as she stabbed his eyes and cheeks and mouth with her frantic kisses, and clenched her thin arms about his neck and

would not let him go until he had to pry her hands away.

That same silly laugh was on his face as he stared at Joan. He probably did not see her, though, for his eyes were all a-blubber with tears. Joan waved to him and called:

"Goodby! good luck!"

But he did not answer, so he probably did not see her. Not that it mattered, of course; but—well, she wished she had not been quite so harsh with him. She wished that when he stammered, "Can you ever forgive me?" she had not answered, "No!"

There was confusion of falling into line, taking up packs, clambering into cars, amid a horde of men and women who would not be denied one more hug, one more kiss. The heads of the soldiers reappeared at the windows, and the hardest part of the farewell was the unconscionable delay of the engineer to draw his long train out of the town.

When he did, it was as if a spear was pulled out of a deep wound. The blood gushed after it. For all the waving and cheering and fluttering of handkerchiefs, and final smiling, that was a funeral train, and the town of Chesham was a mother bereft of her children. The crowd broke up slowly. The sandwiches and fried chicken and the pop bottles neglected by the

A United Artists Picture. *She Goes to War.*

ALL FROM DIFFERENT STATIONS IN LIFE, BUT ALL TRYING TO HELP.

soldiers busy with their last words, were distributed among the children.

Joan went drearily to her car and took the wheel from the waiting chauffeur, who had a craven look. He was not proud of his wife and children and he had the look of a deserter caught slinking away from the battle.

Woman though she was, Joan felt as much ashamed as he did. She had nothing to hold her back. Her father and mother did not need her support, and no children were dependent on her earnings. Nobody was dependent on anything she did. Why was she here? She would not be for long.

Impatient as she was, she could not drive her car according to her rage, for the village people were straggling everywhere. Even their automobiles wandered homeward with a dejected aimlessness.

Turning one corner slowly, Joan saw ahead of her a small old woman toppling along as if she were blind or drunk. It was Mrs. Pike, of course. Joan said to the chauffeur:

"Drop out. You can get back to the house somehow."

She called:

"Oh, Mrs. Pike, won't you let me take you home?"

The poor thing whirled to see herself once

more pursued by that terrible Miss Morgan's terrible car. Fright dried her tears on her cheeks.

But Joan was out and helping her in. And she drove slowly, listening to the creature's babble of Tom and the war. She was in such a panic of loneliness, that Joan laid her hand on the withered fingers and squeezed them. Mrs. Pike said for the dozenth time:

"It's war is the terrible thing. The poor boys it murders! And who shall say which of them will ever be seen round here again? Oh, it's war's the terrible thing!"

"But the women have the worst of it, Mrs. Pike," said Joan. "They give up everything and wait for what comes back. I'm not as brave as you are. I couldn't stand it to stay home."

Mrs. Pike stared at her: "You're not thinkin' of follyin' the troops?"

Joan nodded. Mrs. Pike marvelled: "Well, there's no stoppin' the women these days from anything. I'd be glad to be goin' along with Tom, but it don't look likely. If you do get over, look after him a little, won't you? He's a wild one, but good as gold—and all I have."

"I'll look after him," said Joan.

Then they were in front of the Pike homestead. It was to the other houses in town what

Mrs. Pike was to the women, neat and little and poor and afraid. The garden about it was an old widow's garden.

But it was from and for such homes that the armies were streaming overseas, and the son this little woman had raised was a big man and a brave.

There was something not so contemptible after all, Joan thought, in the fact that a boy from this cottage, a garage-worker should be an officer superior on his merits to a Percy Van Ruyper on his family's.

CHAPTER IV

Joan was like a foreign exile in Chesham now. She could find no outlet for her military ambitions, and she had no other.

While the townspeople busied themselves in the countless industries of the stay-at-homes, she sulked. Chesham contributed its quota to the twenty-two million grown-up members and the nine million children members of the Red Cross, who raised four hundred million dollars toward the relief of the world's vast woe. Chesham's wives and daughters were well represented among the eight million Red Cross women who knitted sweaters, socks, mufflers, filled comfort kits, manufactured three hundred seventy-one million of such relief articles, and provided nearly a million Christmas packages for soldiers.

But Joan would not knit. Joan would not make bandages, or pyjamas. Joan would not work in a field garden, or serve on a committee to see that whole wheat bread replaced white, and that sweets were not wasted. Joan would

do none of the wise and beautiful and womanly things that were being done or crying to be done. She bought Liberty Bonds but she would not auction them off, nor peddle War Savings Stamps. She would not lift a finger in any of the huge drives for this, that and the other. In the gigantic mobilizing of American womanhood she was a slacker who would not be drafted, persuaded or bullied into the ranks.

She spent her time writing letters and putting through long distance calls to influential people who might get her a job appropriate to a namesake of the soldier girl of Arc.

She madly resolved to disguise herself in the uniform, enlist and go abroad in the ranks. She would stow away on a transport if necessary. She had heard and read of numberless women who palmed themselves off as men and deceived their own companions, their own lovers even.

But when she studied herself in her riding clothes, coat, waistcoat, breeches and boots, a costume not far remote from the uniform of field officers except for color, she realized the generally ignored but undeniable truth that a woman in man's clothes is more conspicuously woman than in her own.

A cousin of hers, an officer on his way overseas, spent a few days at her home and she

pleaded with him to take her along as his orderly, or striker or anything. He was most sincere in his regrets, quite doleful about it, until she dressed herself up in a new uniform of his, put on a false moustache and paraded before him. Then he almost died laughing.

She damned him for a fool and ran to her mirror. She recognized with tragic frustration that in spite of what was called her boyish figure, her figure was not boyish in any contour. So little added and so much was there!

She cursed her beauty and her grace and wept because she was so enviably the desire of many men and the despair of rival women. She writhed in shame because she was a daughter of wealth instead of any poor lad who might volunteer or be dragged to war.

Her homely friend, Dorcas, had long since gone to France with the first Red Cross units, and was playing the angel to wounded allies while she waited for the cruelly delayed American troops to arrive in driblets. But Joan had never learned to administer ether, or prepare a shattered warrior for the surgeon's knives, or share his pain with him afterwards. Fearless as she was she was afraid of other people's miseries and she was profoundly ignorant in their relief.

At length in an outburst of impatience she

bade her vainly pleading parents farewell "for the duration of the war," and took a train to New York determined to cut her way through to France by hook or by crook. From the window of her drawing-room she caught glimpses of "farmerettes" in overalls and huge straw hats replacing the toilers who were now Uncle Sam's hired men. She saw women taking over part or all of various tasks that had hitherto lain beyond their ken. She saw great factories packed with members of what had once been called the gentler sex and held down to that insulting flattery.

When she reached New York the city seemed transformed. Women were driving taxicabs, acting as conductors on busses, as motormen on street cars, as laborers of every sort. The elevators were driven by women. The waiters were almost all waitresses. In the banks, the offices, the shops, women, women, women.

The town was packed with soldiers, sailors, marines. The streets pulsed with brass bands and marching regiments. The air was full of orators and drivers of drives. The theatres were lairs for speakers haranguing the last pennies out of the audiences. The aisles were paced by women with subscription blanks. The nation was war-mad.

Joan whiled a few weeks away driving an

army automobile and carrying officers and messengers here and there. This permitted her to go about in a uniform of a sort, a jaunty overseas cap, long skirted coats, breeches and puttees. But this was only a torment, for it took her no nearer to France.

The Y. M. C. A. had been calling frantically for women to go abroad and look after the spiritual welfare of the soldiers. But Joan had no taste for feminine piety. Women of all sorts were sailing, even actresses in droves, vaudeville people, acrobats. Everybody sailed but Joan.

One doleful winter night as she returned to her hotel she met in the lobby a bevy of girls from Jones College where she had spent a year or two. They were in a fetching garb of flattish hats, collars and neckties, broad-lapelled, patch-pocketed blouses and severe skirts. One or two of them hailed her and told her that they were sailing in a few days as a "Y" unit from their Alumnae Association.

"And what on earth do you expect to do over there?" Joan demanded.

"Distribute cigarettes and chocolate and help cheer up the poor soldiers."

"No fighting, of course," sighed Joan. "No trench-work."

"I'm afraid not. Still, we'll be in France."

"And that's the only place to be. I think I'll go along with you. It's better than nothing."

"Oh, but we're full up. There's not a chance."

Not even a chance to go as a "Y" girl from old Jones! But as if providence had at last got round to Joan's prayers among the infinite files of ascending petitions, there came a chance.

Emma Pinkerton fell ill at the last moment. Joan had always loathed Emma and she would cheerfully have poisoned her now to make sure of her place. Luckily that was not necessary. Emma for once did the decent thing. She failed to get well until the transport sailed.

She cried herself sick again when she learned that Joan Morgan, of all women—Joan Morgan, whom she had always abominated above all women, had gone abroad in her uniform and under her name with her passport.

Joan had telephoned to Washington to a very high personage and had been promised that any forgeries or other juggleries she might commit would be rectified afterwards. So she went over to Hoboken with the little flock of shepherdesses from dear old Jones.

The docks were mountainous with war equipment. Groaning cranes were hoisting locomotives, cannon, ambulances, trucks, high

in air and lowering them into holds. Troops of every service from every region were herded like cattle, their needs attended to by uniformed women distributing coffee, sandwiches, knitted goods, housewives, writing paper, envelopes, postal cards. . . .

But the strangest things were the girls of all ages going overseas in such numbers and varieties of uniform that it looked as if this were to be a woman's war. Red Cross nurses, ambulance drivers, motor corps girls, entertainers for the Over-There Theatre League, Salvation Army girls, Signal Corps Telephone operators, Yeomanettes, Y. W. C. A. women, Hostess House Workers, Library Association workers, units from various women's colleges.

Since Penthesilea put her Amazons aboard the galleys to go to the aid of beleaguered Troy there had never been seen such an array of women warriors. Since Eve took the first bite of the apple of knowledge, womankind had probably had no such thrill of new experience.

Joan was more nearly content than she had ever been before in her life. Discomforts and hardships that would have driven her into tantrums before were the very luxuries of existence now. She did not mind being jostled by the common herd. The herd feeling was the one big joy.

When the mighty transport was finally dragged from the slip and headed seaward, the sensation was overwhelming. Her heart swelled till it needed an ocean and an unhindered sky for its expansion.

The Statue of Liberty held up her torch to light them Eastward. For the first time it meant something to Joan that this Liberty was the gift of France, faced France, and was a woman.

CHAPTER V

The ocean itself was a new realm, once more a place of unknown terrors. Hitherto its only dangers for big ships had been the icebergs. Storms had ceased to mean anything perilous.

But now the submarines lurked everywhere with diabolic cunning. They had shot down the "Lusitania" and many another fine craft and dragged women and children into the deeps along with the rest. At any moment of day or night there might come the rush of a shark-like torpedo, the rending crash, the slow death of the good ship and the all-engulfing waves.

But this was war and death was on the turn of a card. It was harrowing, but it was not dull.

Joan was not neglected by the officers or the soldiers, but she felt no temptation to flirt. It seemed too tame a diversion for times like these. She took more interest in the women. They were the novelty of the era. Who were

they, whence did they come, and why were they here? Men had been marching and sailing to war since time began. But this was woman's first crusade.

Joan made acquaintances of all sorts but she did not get to know Sadie Slevsky and Katie Dugan until the voyage was almost over. Sitting on a pile of equipment and studying a book on first aid, she heard a cry of alarm, a stampede of feet. Then all the noisy voices of the ship were hushed except the soughing of the engine's great heart, the clamor of bells, the mournful swish of the waves alongside.

Joan ran with the rest to the rail, not even seeing that she wedged in between two cronies, a huge Irish girl and a little Slavic thing.

Silently hands went out to point where the staring eyes made out a something like a spear handle pushing through the water. It was a periscope, a submarine. From its hidden presence issued an unseen messenger, whose fatal advance could be traced in a delicate evanescent procession of bubbles.

Katie Dugan and Sadie Slevsky clutching at each other seized each a hand of Joan's and wrung it bitterly, while Joan thought:

"Here comes death!"

She did not think how overyoung she was to die, how frightful it would be to sink and stran-

gle in the unfathomable welter of this ocean. She thought only: "So I shall not get to France after all."

The ship seemed to dodge and leap like a whale trying to escape a dart from a harpoon gun. And it swerved in the nick of time to let the torpedo pass ahead and continue its bubble track into indefinite space.

Thousands of souls felt life come back like a new gift, a re-birth.

There was another cry, more pointing. A second torpedo was on its way. The transport shuddered with a last effort.

The torpedo came almost mincingly flaunting its airy plume through the waves. It steamed alongside and passed by astern to the lonely vanity of its journey's end.

Fascinated, the multitude that it was to have annihilated, watched its voyage. Little Sadie Slevsky leaned so far out that she lost her balance. Her wail of fear caught Joan's attention. She clutched, flung herself backward and brought the girl safely away from the precipice of the tall ship's side.

The rescue seemed to be more terrifying than the peril. The three had time now to realize what the plunge would have meant for that pitiful waif into that lonely sea.

Joan smiled as Tom Pike had smiled, feeling

anything but cheerful. Sadie Slevsky overwhelmed her with an almost Oriental extravagance of gratitude, and big Katie Dugan smote her on the back with a staggering accolade and roared:

"God's fresh blessings about you! But for you she'd have been but supper for the fish."

Never had Joan been so embarrassed as by the praise of these two plebeians. This was the first time she had ever saved a life. It was a poor life but she had saved it. Perhaps there would be more of such work. If so, it was even more wonderful than taking life.

To be a soldier had been all her hope. Now she saw that there was something to be said for the womanly business of saving the pieces. And the society of women was not so stupid as she had imagined, partly no doubt from the fact that she had always rather despised her own sex for its general bad sportsmanship, cowardice, petty interests and petty jealousies.

But this going to war was the sporting thing to do, and the women were trampling over one another to get into the danger zone. The stigma of cowardice had been forever removed. There was nothing very petty about the titanic organizations being erected and managed by women. Their mutual jealousy was no more manifest now than that of the army officers and

the rivalling men, and since that was a jealousy for posts of danger and toil, it was at least no petty jealousy.

Joan was beginning to see certain compensations in the misfortune of being a woman. To be a woman of 1917 was something rather marvellous, when you came to think of it.

She was in a simmer of contentment with Katie Dugan on one side of her and Sadie Slevsky on the other. They could hardly have met at all but for the war, and then only as hopeless aliens to one another's souls.

The three made a quaint trio and when they sat down together to grow better acquainted, they made a quainter. Joan knew from Katie Dugan's uniform that she belonged to the Salvation Army—the bass drum was probably her favorite musical instrument. She had been a waitress in Childs, indeed, before she saw the light and followed it.

But Sadie Slevsky was a puzzle. What was this peculiar flamboyant little East Sider doing in this company? Sadie explained:

"I'm doin' a song and dance single in vawdvul when I see about the Over There Theayter League—and I joined on.

"I do me act in one. I go grand in the small small time but on the big I'm a chaser." The war comes and it hurts me so I can't hardly

dance. I read about all those poor people in Europe where I come from, dying, dying. My people's home was there. My father and mother, they cry all the time.

"Why should I dance? But the theayters get full of soldiers and they like to see dancing, hear jokes, singing. I am not so ashamed to be only a acrobat, soft-shoe footer. Then I read that the soldiers in France need people to make them laugh. They call for singers, dancers. I seen the chance to do something for my country. It done so much for my people. Why wouldn' I want to pay back a little?

"My father and my mother were starving in Poland—and they came to America—ah, such a country for them. Now my father makes money, my mother does not grub in a field but she has a fine sewing machine. My brothers will be rich, or their children. This is the grand country and even if I die, I die dancing for the soldiers."

Joan loved her for her fire. She and Katie were not middle class, anyway, not that horrible thing at least. Extremes are always more congenial than the half way hearts.

Katie was descended from kings, of course, but was a long way from the throne, from royal wealth. She was a stevedore of a woman, but Sadie was humble beneath humility, frail

and useless except for her specialty. She could sing comic patter in a twang and intersperse it with cartwheels and furious contortions. She could make the spangles gleam on her lithe fierce body. She would make the soldiers forget for a while.

Joan was rich and wise and she could be tactful and very kind when she wanted to. And suddenly she wanted to.

The soldiers packed into the transport were big and forlorn and on their way to a world whose ways and words were altogether baffling to them. They needed help. They needed mothering. They needed womanhood about them, womanhood that spoke their language, knew their whims and prejudices and the little needs that are so much greater than the big.

Joan felt as old as the mother of God. She felt for perhaps the first time the rapture of maternity. The American army was to be her baby. She would take it on her knee and comfort it, heal it, and set it to laughing before it ran back again to its rough games on the battlefield.

Something told her that she and these two women would see much of the future together. They would be three musketeers, three knights errant, out in the world hunting adventure for noble purposes.

Women were at large for the first time after untold centuries of seclusion and suppression. There were new things ahead of them, and experiences more wonderful than could ever fall to any man, for, after all, these soldiers were going to do what men had always done.

These women were going to do what had never been dreamed before.

CHAPTER VI

Of all the companions she would never have chosen, fate had chosen for Joan these two, the giant waitress who had joined the Salvation Army, and the tiny acrobat, Sadie Slevsky, who had joined the Over There Theatre League.

They laid great plans for the work their trio would do, but the more they learned of the chaos they were approaching the less probable it seemed that they would ever meet again.

Still, Joan knew her Paris, and she also knew no end of important people in France. She was sure that she could accomplish the usual miracles that fall to the lot of women of wealth, beauty and high social rank who are willing to use all sorts of bribery.

The first blow fell promptly. As soon as they landed, she and Katie and Sadie were seized by representatives of their various organizations and shipped in different trains to their separate headquarters in Paris.

It was an altogether different Paris from the one that Joan had seen so often. It was all soldiers and women now.

Joan had come over to lend the war God's gift of womanhood. But she found myriads of women ahead of her. French women were everywhere as they had been from the far-off beginning of the conflict. They had long since taken over the abandoned tasks of the men as the American women were just beginning to do at home. Mingled with them were their allies, English women, Belgians, Italians, Russians, Rumanians, Serbians—and Americans—in mobs!

The Jones College alumnae arrived at the Y. M. C. A. headquarters at a time when there was no opening for the unit as a whole, and the girls had to be scattered about where they were needed. Joan found herself among people who had no information as to her family importance and not the faintest interest in it. She was sent from this official to that, and she was footsore and furious when she reached her destination in the department of a Miss Brewer, who was equally heartsore and furious.

Miss Brewer had been accumulating grudges against her own sex while distributing to their posts a succession of women, most of them pests, to her thinking, most of them monotonously eager to take command, yet unwilling and unfit even to serve. When she saw Joan,

she began with the final insult of getting the name wrong:

"What do you want to do, Miss Morton? What can you do?"

"Anything, preferably fighting, or at least driving an ammunition truck or an ambulance in the firing zone," said Joan icily. "And my name is Miss Morgan, if you don't mind."

"I don't mind in the least. Do you know anything about repairing motor machinery, Miss Morgan?"

"Everything."

"Fine! I'll put you in a garage."

"You will not. I want to be up where the shells are bursting."

"The firing line is outside the control of the Y. M. C. A. Can you keep books?"

Joan shook her head at this, and at, "Can you run a grocery store? wrap packages? sell goods? make change? take dictation? manage a typewriter?——"

"No, and if I could, I wouldn't."

Miss Brewer made short shift of her. "Well, then, I'm afraid I shall have to classify you as unskilled labor. This floor needs scrubbing badly."

"Indeed? Then scrub it."

"You refuse to scrub this floor, Miss Morton?"

"Morgan! Morgan! Do you realize who it is you are talking to, Miss Brewster?"

"I'll know better when I see if, and how, you do what you're told to do."

"Well, I'll not scrub this floor."

Miss Brewer laid a card before Joan:

"Take this to the address you see there and they'll arrange for your train and your boat. If you hurry you can start back tomorrow."

Joan wavered between murder and suicide. Then she found tears of hate and of self-pity at her lashes. To cry before this Brewer beast would be too much. After a long and desperate wrestle with her own soul, she gnashed her teeth and groaned:

"Where's the damned scrubbing brush?"

"You'll find a pail and mop and water and an apron in the closet just outside the door to your left."

Miss Brewer did not even look up to gloat as Joan darted out, found the weapons for a warfare she had never expected to wage, girded on the uniform of a scullery maid, came back and dropped to her knees.

It salved her anger a little to slosh the water noisily, to whack the brush and bang the tin bucket. In the annoyance of dealing with the next member of visiting American royalty Miss Brewer did not even hear her.

Joan's white hands flinched from the degrading contacts, her pink nails broke and dulled. She made a penance of it with the worst possible grace. She had had to cross the Atlantic to do what she would never have dreamed of doing at home. At home!—a woman's place is in the home!

She was startled. Those were the words of Tom Pike. Only one thing more could be added to her shame, and that would be for him to walk in and catch her at this domestic task. How the big brute would laugh.

Her hand clenched on the brush as if she saw him grinning at her. She would belabor him with the mop if—. But Tom did not appear. He was having humiliations of his own far away.

Now and then Joan had to lift her fingers hastily to keep them from being trodden on by the procession of visitors of Miss Brewer's desk. She heard so many demanding choice front seats in the war zone, and so few revealing any intelligence, that she caught an inkling of the great truth that all wars are waged by a majority of stupid, selfish blunderers, and depend for victory on many lucky accidents and the luck of finding a few wise and powerful leaders.

Joan was tempted more than once to rise and

say to some especially recalcitrant woman:

"Here, you idiot, take my scrubbing brush. It's too good for you, but there's nothing lower to do."

Yet she never dreamed of herself as one of the same crowd. She was aware of an innate superiority and was resolved to win the war yet. She would stick at nothing until her chance came, and then——!

There were generals and politicians who had been proud to be asked to her father's house and had accepted her smiles as medals of achievement. She lost no opportunity to get at them; she called, she telephoned, she wrote letters. But red tape was their insulation and she could win no attention at all.

She grew so furious that she was on the point of open rebellion, when she overheard Miss Brewer actually breaking the heart of an American girl of too high spirit and too reckless an independence. As this poor creature left the room sobbing to take the first steamer west, Joan was glad to be permitted to stay on as a scrubwoman.

She polished the floor so faithfully that she was promoted at last to the high post of messenger girl. She ran errands with such fidelity and such perfect suppression of the volcanic rage within her, that she was elevated to a seat

at the telephone desk, where her French came in handy, and she could vent her temper on invisible enemies.

She took no interest in anything that had interested her at home. There she had danced, flirted, gambled, done everything that the busiest of sportswomen could find to do. In Paris there was no lack of chance to continue her old practices. A great deep dark stream of patriotism and sacrifice flowed through the city toward the battlefields and back again, but on the surface one saw only froth and sparkle and shallow turbulence.

More people seemed to be making love than war. Drunkenness and ribaldry advertised themselves and the soldiers who came in from the front for a "rest period" were apt to be sent back to the trenches to recuperate from orgies of frivolity.

Paris like alcohol seemed to influence Americans chiefly by removing inhibitions, changing suppressions to explosive expressions, and revealing well-hidden selves. Joan, perhaps because she had been so unrestrained, so gaudy, so audacious and devil-may-care at home, was revealed in France as an almost morbidly conscientious girl perishing for the solemn honors of the trenches.

Nothing in all Paris shocked her perhaps so

much as her encounter with Dorcas Beecher. The homely and studious Dorcas had been the only girl of Joan's crowd who had thought to prepare herself for a then invisible war. She was the first of all the Cheshamites, man or woman, to get to France. And now when Joan met her she was in such rowdy company and so toppling in her gait that Joan tore her from the protesting soldiers and took her to her own room.

Dorcas was surly at first, then she began to weep, and finally to talk in a morose humor that frightened Joan, and offended her. She had to keep telling herself that Dorcas had spent a year in hell and had earned the right to cry out:

"I hate my country," she snarled as she coiled up in a corner of Joan's little room. "And it's not the cocktails talking. They've only lifted the lid off.

"Once I was as big a bragger about my country as anybody. I wanted her to get into the fight from the first. When I got over here and saw the horrible state of affairs after two years of war, I said, 'Just wait till America gets here. We'll be right over, a million of us—then more and more millions.'

"The French were polite. They smiled a little and they said: 'Undoubtedly.' They weren't

feeling very cheerful because Russia collapsed just as we entered. That took away three million soldiers from the Allies. Three million!

"That let Germany bring over to this Western front more than six hundred thousand soldiers, the best trained men they had. But I said, 'Wait till Uncle Sam gets here!' The French said, 'We Wait. What else to do?' They were a little sarcastic maybe because the first Americans who reached here a month after we let out our declaration of war a year ago last April— What do you suppose we sent to replace those three million Russians and beat off those six hundred thousand Germans?—twenty-five doctors and fifty nurses.

"I wasn't with the first fifty but I got over a little after General Pershing came across. He reached here in sixty days with his staff and a few cavalrymen. They paraded Paris and the Frenchmen cheered politely. It was mighty polite of them, too, because they were dying by the thousand while they waited. I was nursing the poor things, talking to the mothers and wives and sweethearts of the last boys France and England had.

"It was six months before we had enough soldiers here to shake a stick at. And they had to go through special training. Then Italy collapsed. It looked as if she would follow Rus-

sia, and release a million more troops. But she stopped them—after she had lost a hundred and twenty thousand prisoners.

"Think of that, Joan. My glorious country was sending over moving pictures instead of men, pictures of soldiers in training camps. But we had no ships, and had to borrow ships and nearly everything from the poor hard pressed allies.

"That was a horrible winter over here, and it was March before our men made their first little trench-raid on their own. They took half-a-dozen prisoners. The Germans replied by taking two hundred of ours, just gobbling up a whole outpost. Then to make it look better, they wiped out the British Fifth Army and destroyed or captured two hundred and fifty thousand Englishmen—a quarter of a million gone from poor old England.

"It was a year and two months after we declared war before we got into a real battle. Our men did fine work, Cantigny, Belleau Wood, Château Thierry. They held fast and took about three hundred prisoners, but how many did the Germans take? forty-five thousand!

"And they advanced thirty miles nearer Paris. This was a sad town then, Joan. There didn't seem a chance to save it. The only com-

fort I had was that I was nursing American soldiers, instead of Frenchmen. I expected to be killed or captured but I would die in the American ranks.

"Then came the frightful fifth offensive the day after the French Fourth of July—the Fourteenth. How gay and brave they were singing their battle songs and hoping against hope. They didn't know where the Germans would strike and they had to know, because they had reserves enough only for one spot.

"They guessed right. They laid the trap and sprung it, and thank God, Americans were there and stood up with the best of them.

"And now they say the Germans are done for. They can't make any more offensives. We piled 'em up too thick along the Marne and the Surmelin. But I don't know. All I know is that I'm done.

"I broke myself nursing our wounded boys as they brought 'em from that big battle. They came in stretchers like the conveyors that carry things in factories. And we chopped 'em up and patched 'em up and buried 'em or pushed 'em farther to the rear.

"I've done my bit and it's done me. All I want to do now is to drink and forget. There's going to be work enough for nurses. It took the Germans four years to get where they've

got, and they've lost millions of lives. They've spent their spare time for four years building concrete mountains between here and Germany. All our people have got to do is to drive 'em out. It may take four years, it may take forever. Anyway there's going to be no let-up on the butchery.

"But I won't be here. Somebody else will have to put the ether cones over the dirty tortured faces. Somebody else will have to wash the poor rags of flesh, and somebody else will have to mop up the bloody floor. I've carried out my last bucket of flesh.

"Drinking and dancing are about all I'm good for yet. Sometimes when I get footsore enough or get enough drink in me I can sleep. But the trouble with sleep is, that you dream—God, help me! don't let me dream any more. Haven't you got a little drink here, Joan darling? Anything will do that has the effect of chloroform but doesn't smell like it. Haven't you, dear?"

Joan put her to sleep and watched over her. When she saw Dorcas in the throes of a nightmare, she would wake her and talk to her about anything but the war. That was not easy.

The next day Joan went to her telephone-desk in such a fury to be doing something to end the war, something useful to replace the

bankrupts like Dorcas, that she was all but unapproachable, and her savagery over the wire was blistering.

Suddenly she grew tender and broke down and wept almost joyously, for over the wire came the word from one of her Jones college girls:

"Joan darling, pack your things. We're going forward tomorrow to Marot."

"Where the hell is Marot?" snapped Joan.

"It's as close to the front as they allow women to go. We'll be right in the battle."

"Thank God, thank God!" said Joan, sobbing in the ear of some excited staff officer trying to get some other staff officer on the telephone for some enormous news.

A United Artists Picture. *She Goes to War.*

"PERCY, FOR MY SAKE—DO NOT DISGRACE YOURSELF—COME—"

CHAPTER VII

Joan made no effort to conceal her relief at escaping from Miss Brewer and leaving her stuck at a desk. It would take more than this one little war to teach certain women subordination to other women, and the parting of Joan with her chief was more like a Vandal bidding a Hun goodby than the farewell of two members of the same union on a high and holy crusade.

Joan was in high feather now, for she saw herself riding into the midst of the American soldiers like a rescuing angel in a spick and span uniform. Though she did not quite voice it even to herself, she imagined that it would be of no small encouragement to the army to learn that a Morgan, Miss Joan Morgan, had come out into the forefront of peril to give them a lift.

She rather fancied herself dashing into the trenches on an errand of mercy, and there seizing from some dying soldier, a falling rifle and driving her bayonet into enough Germans to

make them forget Botchkareva and those other peasant women.

She did not wait to be asked to take the wheel of the worn-out flivver that was turned over to the Jones girls as their war-chariot. She just took it.

The road was as rough as the surface of a squally lake petrified. After a day of blistering sun and choking dust and a night in an over-crowded Y barracks, they ran into a rain so steady and so interminable that the journey took on the effect of an excursion across the bottom of a slightly shredded lake. The miserable car jounced and slewed, banging the occupants about with the baggage that loaded their laps and cramped their feet.

Their squeals of distress and their twitters of talk maddened Joan. Their "Oh, dears!" at a bump, their "Good heavenses!" at a skid, their comments on the landscape gave her an acute pain.

And she gave them another when she cursed like a mule-driver. Once they reminded her that such language was inappropriate to ladies wearing the Red Triangle of the Y. But nobody reminded her a second time.

She rode as if alone, despising her sex and all the restrictions imposed upon it by itself and by men. It was not the rough road she

cursed so much as the curse of being only a woman. She swore like a man because she wanted to be with the men, wretched as they looked slogging along in the endless mud toward the slime of the trenches.

The roads were clogged with the passage of the greatest armies in history and with all their appalling impediment, yet the old Joan tried to cheat her way through the traffic tangles!

Ahead of her at one point on the highway was a worse looking flivver than hers. A heavy weight tilted it over one wheel. The car was full of Salvation Army girls. The heavy weight was Katie Dugan.

In hurrying past, Joan managed to shoot a cascade of muddy water all over the passengers. Katie Dugan got most of it, but she was used to it and made no complaint, never dreaming that she owed it to Joan.

Then a camion wallowing through another puddle sprayed Joan as liberally. A mile or more on, the road dipped into a hollow filled with water. The engine of Joan's car chose this moment to stall. While the other girls shrieked and climbed on the seats and tucked their feet in, Joan flung out into the thigh-deep slush, and waded forward to the submerged crank.

As she spun it, dirty water flew up into her

face, but she had no words left to express her feelings, and she hardly heard the uproar from the many-horned traffic she was holding up. The engine answered at length and tried as hard as a flogged burro on a slippery mountain side, but it could not grip and hoist its burden over the first steep.

Back at the wheel, Joan pleaded with it in vain. Suddenly the car received a mighty shove from the rear and lurched forward to the level. Too busy to turn round and see to whom she was beholden, Joan called back:

"Much obliged, men."

Katie Dugan, who had left her own car and put her shoulder to Joan's, stood in the spray, spatted her muddy hands together, and growled:

"Meal-a-murder, she takes me for a squad!"

In the late afternoon, the rain curtains were slowly withdrawn, the empty clouds vanished and the sun spread a barrage of light over the reeking host.

Somewhere up front a heavy cannon was mired and the struggle to extricate it blocked the lines on both sides. Soldiers gathered about a small open truck in which a little upright piano was lashed down under tarpaulin. Two girls and a sickly young man asleep on the floor were wakened by the soldiers:

"Hay, perfessor, wake up and hit the box! Ladies, give us a song!"

The dreamers sat up with a start, began to strip the piano, and threw off their own raincoats. One of the girls, Tillie Lee, was too hoarse to make a sound. The other girl was Sadie Slevsky.

After the piano emitted a few chord-like coughs, Sadie began to sing a familiar tune. The soldiers took up the chorus, and the wave of harmony rolled back along the line.

It was not "The Star Spangled Banner" they chanted, nor "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord." It was:

"Beautiful K-K-Katie, beautiful K-K-Katie,
You're the only g-g-g-girl that I adore;
When the m-m-moon shines over the c-c-cow shed,
I'll be waitin' at the k-k-k-kitchen door."

In the interludes the two girls stuttered their feet, twisted their hips and behaved in general as little like Red Cross nurses as possible. That was what the soldiers wanted. Red Cross nurses were saints in their place, but nobody wanted to visit their place.

So the soldiers looked up to Sadie Slevsky and Tillie Lee as angels from the clouds. A

thousand voices roared the serenade of the kitchen and the cowshed. A joy of life and a hope for more of it blessed the souls of these candidates for death, but no one knew even the names of Sadie Slevsky and Tillie Lee or gave them credit for the priceless contribution they made. Perhaps the song helped to boost the cannon out of the mud, for the feet began to march again, the wheels to roll.

The Y girls made no halt for supper lest they lose their place in the tide. The girl who sat by Joan held out to her a sandwich, which she bit at when she could, not always missing the muddy fingers that pressed it to her teeth.

The moonlight mingled with the sunset as they passed a military cemetery, a vast smooth hillside thick with small white crosses, each of them the memorial of a dead man.

Even Joan's matter-of-fact heart went occult for a while. She saw the meaning of those crowded memorials. Every one of them had its counterpart in some home. A telegram. Wild grief. Inconsolable loss. A gold star. A broken family.

Scarfs of wan vapor drifted across the hill, trailing over the graves, and they seemed to Joan to be the souls of the bereaved, gathering. A company of wraiths swept among the crosses and lingered, here a mother; there a wife alone,

or with children clinging to her skirts; at other crosses sweethearts bewailing the romances that would never be fulfilled.

She had told Tom Pike's mother the truth when she said that the women who stayed at home had the worst of it. But did they stay at home? Surely their souls were here wandering, searching for the unreturning.

Long after the graveyard was passed, the mood of it oppressed Joan, until fatigue and drowsiness deadened her mind to everything except the need of sleep. Her arms ached beyond bearing and her hands were numb, but there must be no halt until they reached their billet at Marot. The most careful calculation, allowing for every imaginable delay, had put them there by sundown. The sun was long since down and the moon high up, and they were still miles away.

Bump, slump, skid, swish, slish, clatter, bang, snort, chug, chutter, the car went over the vague wet highway. The two lines of men, guns and tanks shuttling past each other had turned to shadows, ghosts from nowhere bound to another place of the same name.

In spite of the cruel progress, Joan's companions slept, tossing as if they were mauled about with invisible clubs. But Joan must keep awake. Sometimes she caught herself out of

a doze just in time to save the car from turning over or colliding with some other night-wanderer.

The worst of it came on a stretch of perfect road smooth and new like the roads in America untouched by war. Then suddenly the highway of ease turned into an inferno of muddy detours and bone-wracking, spring-wrenching travel.

The road was under repair by a regiment of engineers weird and diabolic in the flares of searchlights and flares. They were working feverishly night and day to prepare it for the passage of the greater guns that were desperately needed to shatter the German fortifications.

In her half-trance of fatigue Joan's heart plunged. She thought she heard a familiar voice cry out. It had the sound of home. Whose could it have been?

It kept coming back to her as if it followed. But she was a long way gone from it before she could realize that it reminded her of Tom Pike's voice. She dismissed it as a coincidence. Yet it was his voice, for he had been transferred to the Engineers and was in command of a midnight detail.

Suddenly the rain began again to stitch the dark and fill the gloom with its mournful chat-

ter. It made bead curtains before the headlights and the landscape was all one until a blurred web of dawn revealed on the Eastern horizon what was left of the once beautiful city of Marot.

The ugliness of the goal and the knowledge that she had arrived at last and without accident robbed Joan of the last shred of energy. She wanted to bow her head on her hands and sleep with the wheel for her pillow. But there were other cars back of her and she would not surrender the glory of being the first American woman in Marot.

The grand entrance should have been made on a May Day, sun gleaming, bands playing, roses everywhere. The soldiers should have been garlanded and beautiful women should have stepped forth in flowered garments from gilded coaches.

But Joan, the immaculate, the haughty, had not bathed for two days. She had not changed her outer or inner clothes for two days. She had not washed her face or hands or brushed her hair. Her face was spattered with greasy mud. Her hair was matted. She looked like a besotted hussy that had slept out all night in a gutter.

The other Y girls felt much as she did. The homeliest of them abhorred to be unclean.

Nothing in all the ordeals of the war tortured the women who took part in it more cruelly than the enforced and prolonged slovenliness. Ladies, who would never have ventured to a luncheon without a hot scrub or to dinner without another, must live among thousands of men in an untidiness that would have embarrassed a beggar.

Joan had counted upon sneaking into Marot in the kindly concealment of the night, steaming herself well, changing her clothes, powdering and painting just enough to give herself radiance, and then, as it were, dawning upon the soldiers at her best.

To her unbearable disgust she found the soldiers waiting for her. The news of the approach of the Y and the Salvation Army had been sent ahead and the men were all agog. Joan's car was sighted just after the reveille roll call and the ranks broke in time to release the whole garrison.

The men themselves had not washed or breakfasted. They were in reeking raincoats with water pouring from their hatbrims in veils. Splashing through the pools they ran howling:

"Here they come! The ladies! God bless 'em! Here they are!"

Joan wanted to drive right through them but

the men who had charged German machine-gun nests were not afraid of that rheumatic flivver and it bucked a wall of flesh. Joan hated every mother's son of them and in her wrath at being discovered at the worst of all possible worsts, she shrieked:

"Get the hell out of the way, damn it!"

She could have died with shame at such an entrance speech, but the soldiers adored it. The hungry-eyed, hungry-eared lad who happened to be jammed closest to her, pleaded:

"Say them beautiful words again, lady. They listen like home, sweet home."

CHAPTER VIII

The speaker was shoved away by a forlong giant who clutched the door of the car and besought her:

"Gosh, missy, but you're beautiful. Sing again, won't you? if it ain't more'n, 'Howdy, boy, howdy!' "

Joan began to cry, but she sobbed:

"Howdy, boy, howdy!"

Her weary dirty hand was caught up in two smothering paws. Their owner was hurled past, and another pair of famished eyes stared and a husky voice rasped:

"You're welcomer than the flowers in May."

Joan was laughing and weeping and persuaded that perhaps she looked better than she thought. These boys could evidently see through the flaws of travel. She smiled like a queen accepting due homage, and felt that she was recognized for what she was after all.

Then she realized that the scrawny girl at her elbow was getting just as much attention. The dull women in the back seat were also being

fought for. She understood that the acclaim was for womanhood in general and American womanhood in particular. She was merely a national girl, impersonal, allegoric.

When the next soldier clung long enough to peer at her and say:

"You're pirty enough to come from Maine. Do ye?"

Before she could shake her head, the questioner was shouldered away by another who peered and pleaded:

"Oregon's our state, ain't it?"

She denied this, too, only to hear the same voice asking the same question of stodgy Becky Platt in the rear seat. This stung her a little but less than it might have if her hand had not been so snatched at and fondled by the line reeling past.

It was like trying to shake hands with a football team during a scrimmage. But though she was not hailed as Joan Morgan, she was hailed, and she found a certain wonderfulness in that. Her voice grew softer and kindlier and the tears were happy that slid down her dirty cheeks.

Officers appeared now and reduced the men to a little order, gave the women a more formal reception and escorted the cars to the center of the town.

The girls crept from their wheeled cell, top-

pled about on legs full of pins and needles, and distinctly suggested drunken fishwives. But, if the soldiers felt that their anticipation had overadvertised the realization, they gave no sign.

Other automobiles loaded with other women rolled up to be cheered with the same enthusiasm. Perhaps the height of glory was vouchsafed to the very old but very spry mother of this Y group, Mrs. Dixon.

She found herself suddenly dowered with a thousand sons, and their tenderness toward her was multiplied and magnified till it became almost a religion. In every eye that fed upon her there was a loving reverence that embraced both her and another mother somewhere.

Mrs. Dixon found it hard to shake off the hands that wanted just to touch her, and to gather her ewes together long enough to say:

"Go to your billets, girls, and leave your baggage, and wash up a bit. But don't stop to primp for we've kept these poor boys waiting far too long already."

The entire army offered itself for red-cap service and threatened to tear the bundles to pieces with fighting over them. Joan was just identifying hers when a war whoop arose over the arrival of the Salvation Army contingent.

Their fame had run like wildfire through

France and they had no hostility to encounter anywhere. The Y girls were deserted for the moment by the stampede toward the lassies. Joan, abysmally humbled, glared at the plebeian women, but, seeing one who stood up like the Eiffel Tower, she ran with the soldiers, broke through them and seized her, crying her name. Katie Dugan let out the screech of a banshee and whipped Joan up in the air as if she were a dandled brat.

Katie was so tall that most of the soldiers were dwarfed in their majesty, and paid their devoirs to girls on whom they could smile down with the proper benignity. Joan and Katie were left to themselves to exchange the necessary small talk and discuss the vanished Sadie Slevsky. As they chattered, the billet master came up with assignments to quarters and Joan made use of some of the appeal she usually saved for generals. She succeeded in persuading him to revise the slips so as to put her with Katie. She was fed up on the Jones College outfit and fascinated by the barbaric wildness of the big Dugan.

Going with Katie meant that Joan would have to give up much superior quarters—if there could be degrees in such squalor as faced all of them. But she and Katie had taken a friendship to each other.

The soldiers who had volunteered as porters acted as guides and led the girls past a half-demolished church. The rain piling down through the shattered roof roared in the hollow shell of the walls. Where one smashed buttress had fallen away, there was such a gash in the stone that the girls could see behind the altar a painted Christ with an anachronistic bullet hole through the spear-wound.

The way led up a winding alley running with rain like a shallow brook. They splashed past strange hovels whimsically ruined by bombardments. Within some of them people lived like frightened animals in caves. They had such love for their own nooks and crannies that they had returned to the shattered hamlets as soon as the Germans had been ousted.

At last the guide turned down a flight of cracked steps into the cellar of a house whose upper stories were blasted away.

Katie looked over Joan's head into a cavern resonant with the everlasting rain. It was such a cellar as one would hardly choose for the storage of coal, but it was as safe as any place in town, and drier than many in the riddled wreckage.

"Make yourselves at home, ladies," said one of the men.

"I'd hate to ask that of a pig," said Katie.

But the soldiers looked on the place with envy:

"It's terrible for ladies, but it's swell quarters to what we got."

While they dumped the barracks bags on the floor, Katie found two candle-stubs and lighted them, and Joan studied the room with dismay. She knew better than to expect bath tubs in a French village, but she was not elated by the sight of a rusty tin basin on a soap box with an oil can of water nearby.

Katie closed the door on the soldiers and locked it, and began to tug at the cords that held her sack of clothes together. Joan attacked her own and rolled out on the floor her entire trousseau, a pair of extra shoes, a few stockings, some underwear, a change of uniform, soap, toothbrushes, and the rest of the minimum equipment she had been permitted to bring along. In a little mirror she studied her woeful face and did not know it at first, or the grimy fingers that held the glass.

She whipped off her clothes and washed her body shudderingly in cold water so far from clean that she would have washed the water first if there had been anything to wash it in. Meanwhile Katie turned her back and fought with a pair of knotted shoelaces, groaning:

"Oh, Gawd, what I could have called these

things if I only hadn't joined the Salvation Army!"

It was not necessary to go far to refill the oil can. One had only to reach out of the little window and set it under a stream from what was left of the roof.

Before Katie had bathed in turn, there was a knock at the door. A voice ordered the girls to make haste to their jobs.

Out into the rain they climbed and trotted through the dismal drizzle to their future offices. Katie went to a former butcher shop that had been turned over to the Salvation Army. Joan found the Y girls under Mother Dixon cleaning out an abandoned general store.

Joan needed no Miss Brewer to force her to her knees with the scrubbing brush. Counters were improvised, curtains hung, chairs and benches made or stolen, and from the boxes dumped off the trucks emerged a guitar, a phonograph, writing paper and envelopes and stamps, a stove, boilers, glasses, cups, cocoa, cigarettes, cigars, plug and pipe tobacco, candy, playing cards, chess and checker boards, and what not?

At the Salvation Army dugout the stoves were red hot and pies were baking, doughnuts browning in the elfin music of sizzling grease.

Fatigue and loss of sleep were things of no

interest to the bustling housewives who felt that they were where they ought to be, and thanked the spirit of the new day that inspired them to bear all things and brave all things for their men.

It gave each woman, homely, slattern or fair, a feeling of royalty to be so needed, so precious, so reverend. Girls who had been ignored in their home towns now had hundreds of lovers pouring out praise and imploring a glance.

CHAPTER IX

By and by the Y hut was ready for business. The stock was within reach behind the counters. The cocoa was bubbling in the cauldron. The coffee was blackening and the sandwiches piling high. The gramophone began to snarl a rickety tune for those who would dance with the girls or with one another for the dance' sake. The card and checker tables were ready. The desks were waiting, packed with material for those who would heed the placard, "Have you written home today?"

The moment the word was given, the men came in with a rush. The first and luckiest begged the free girls to dance. The others, while waiting their turn, sat down to scrawl messages for their people overseas, played games, or thronged the counters and spent their money buying what they needed or did not need, really buying the right to stare at an American girl, hear her speak and receive her smiles with the change.

To Joan fell the task of waiting on the counter customers. She was drowsier than she realized and her arithmetic was further away. She hated to take the pitiful little money these lads worked so hard and risked so much to get. And she was so afraid to cheat them that she always overpaid them. Some of them refused to take advantage of her.

Others counted it no robbery to cheat the damned "Y." A few of them kept the excess money from a fear of embarrassing Joan by calling her attention to her errors—perhaps.

She whirled from enquirers to shelves and was so confused that she did nothing right. When a gigantic unshaven gorilla mumbled a request she slipped him a plug of chewing tobacco, though he wanted candy. She handed gum drops to a pink-cheeked stripling who longed for fine cut to swell his cheeks. Chewing gum poured forth by the mile. Nearly everybody called for cigarettes and Joan passed out her share of the billions that were sold or given away.

But others asked for toothpaste or razor blades. A sick corporal asked for a mustard plaster. She blistered her hands passing out smoking coffee or deceitful cocoa. She shuffled and dealt sandwiches like playing cards.

And she kept on making her additions and subtractions wrong until Mrs. Dixon, watching her awhile, intervened:

"A day more, Joan, and you'll bankrupt the government. See if you can dance better. And for heaven's sake, smile!"

Joan turned to the narrow space where the Y, in a desperate anxiety to brace up the morale of the soldiers, ruined the morals of the girls—according to the standards of the times of peace. But moral standards like the other laws are silent in times of war.

Joan had no scruples against the dance, but here she had to toss overboard all social prejudice, give her delicate body to the arms of whoever encircled it. She clasped hands and embraced men that she would have refused to sit next to in a theatre. She danced till she could stand no longer. Then the slave-driver, Mrs. Dixon, put her at one of the desks to write letters for soldiers whose hands were unskilled or bruised.

When she began to fall asleep in the midst of the most poignant messages, Mrs. Dixon transferred her to cutting bread and spreading sandwiches.

There was no rest, not even permission to look jaded, for Mrs. Dixon was everywhere, whispering:

"Smile! Never stop smiling!"

When it seemed that Joan would die of sheer exhaustion and the other girls were haggard with weariness, a battalion came back from the trenches, terribly depleted in numbers, jarred in soul and body by the effort to rush fortifications and traps that the Germans had been skilfully installing for three years or more. The worst of it was that the boasted inexhaustible American reserves were all in use and Pershing was calling on the allies to return what troops he had lent them. The battle was bigger and costlier than the Americans had dreamed.

The battalion that returned to Marot now for recuperation charged the Y hut as if it were a hostile trench. Somewhere the girls found new reserves of strength. The sandwiches, the cigarettes and the cocoa poured forth again, the gramophone whined the old dances anew, and gallons of ink flowed across reams of paper.

That night when the hut closed at last, leaving many wretches with their wants unattended and their sick tempers aroused, Joan hobbled to her cellar and found it Paradise because of the cot where she could thrust her massacred feet into a blanket and give her misery sleep.

Katie Dugan came staggering in and did not stop to take off even her shoes. She yawned:

"Ain't min ahful! ahl stummick and ahlways impty. As God's me judge, I've pushed a million doughnuts into the bellies of the sojers and not made a dint in a wan of them."

But Joan was asleep.

The next thing she knew bugles were crowing and somebody was pounding on the door that another battalion was coming up and must be fed.

Sleep and the sweet warm blanket clung to Joan like porous plasters, but she ripped them off. If there had been time for a bath, she would not have had the courage to throw cold water on her skin. It seemed fairly to whinny with the damp chill of the cellar. She pushed arms and legs into their garments, washed with disgraceful carelessness, and had such a fight with her wet boots that she wept over the laces until Katie knelt by her and fastened them for her.

She limped on throttled feet through surly gutters of water to the hut just as another host materialized out of the gray rain and mud after a night's bivouac in the drenched field.

Another day and night found her so drowsy that as she picked her way home with a dim lantern, she was tempted to lie down in the street or on any doorstep and sleep. When she reached her cot at last, her head had hardly

touched the blanket when she felt needles in her scalp. She tried to forget them but they stabbed too sharply. She sat up, tearing at her hair until Katie Dugan, who was undressing, said:

"What's bitin' you now?"

"It's nerves, I suppose, what the French call *mal aux cheveux.*"

Katie stared at her:

"Mal O' sheverr, is it? Well, the Frinch may call it what they like, but the army word is 'cooties'."

Joan glared at her in wrath:

"In my hair? Cooties! How dare you!"

"Oh, cooties ain't partickler who they bite. The ginerals scratch with the best of them."

The hideousness of the mere thought was convincing in conditions where everything wrong was the rule. Joan cowered with shame, but she had to scratch. At last Katie came to her with a candle stub and examined her head, muttering:

"Cooties? There's armies of them within in there. And they're Boches, too. I swear they have helmets on them."

Joan leapt from the cot, longing to jump out of her hateful skin and run away from herself. But Katie was not finished with her.

"There's more to it yet. See the blood on

your gown and your blanket. Your bed is alive with——"

"Don't say it!" Joan shrieked. "I'll go mad if you do!"

She had heard vaguely of such things but they were among the obscenest of all the unmentionables. Nevertheless, like all other obscene things, they could not be annulled by any taboo.

The upshot of it was that Katie emptied the kerosene from Joan's lantern and washed her head with it. Loathsome to herself and loathing the world she slept that night in a broken chair rather than deliver herself to the vermin in her cot.

She woke aching and despondent and found her head quiet but her clothes densely populated. She had to go to the shop just the same, and scratch when she could. And so did everybody else. In time the cootie forced its way out of the conspiracy of silence into the forefront of the news and took its place among the major horrors of the war.

Thereafter Joan and Katie frankly indulged in little game hunts through the wilderness of their clothes every night. They envied the soldiers the great delousing machines that fought in vain against the almost invisible, insatiable,

unbearable army. Yet nothing checked the work at the Y, for the soldiers had not only the cooties but the Germans to fight and they came and went in woeful multitudes.

The least of these had a sacred right to the incalculable blessing of a hot cup of cocoa, a package of cigarettes, or a dance with a decent girl. They were not denied. A dozen soldiers said to Joan:

"Thank God for women and tobacco."

And she answered them every one:

"In the next war, you'll take them both into the trenches with you."

CHAPTER X

Day after day, night after night the human torrents ran this way or that through the town. It was hard to know which to feel sorrier for, the men who came back with stories too cruel to tell, or the men who were being thrust into the slaughter machine. The girls could not forget that even if they killed themselves with overwork, they did no more than their share. Everybody's life was surrendered and pawned, and to get it back was rather luck than justice.

In the topsy-turvy of war nearly everybody seemed to be ashamed to live while so many perished. Life was laid on the altar of the nation.

Yet within the passion for the nation there was room for love of sections. Patriotism was like a nest of Chinese boxes.

The North pitted itself against the South, the East against the West, the Midwest against them all. The states were in such rivalry that when there was no enemy to fight, the Military Police had their work cut out for them to keep

the partisans of this state from beating the partisans of that to death. Inside the state units, there were further sectional subdivisions of love. The towns and cities had their bitter factions. New York had its West side and East side and uptown and Harlem, Bronx and Brooklyn feuds. The smallest cities had their patriots on either side of the railroad track.

The girls in the Y were subject to the same sectionalism, and quarreled among themselves. Each one of them except Joan had met a hundred men or more from her state, her county or her town. Though all the world rolled by, nobody named Chesham as his place of origin.

Everybody asked Joan if she were from here or there, and she could never say Yes. The village of Chesham came to be a joke. The girls and soldiers called it, "The town that nobody comes from."

Joan began to defend the place that she had always ridiculed, and to love it as a neglected child of unmerited oblivion. But at last, one day, a soldier buying a pack of cards from her, said:

"Chesham's your town, ain't it, ma'am?"

"Yes! Chesham!" Joan gasped. "Are you from there?"

"No, but I met up with a guy who said he was. An engineer he is—with the outfit that's

just outside, workin' their way to the front. I told him there was a swell dame from his town, and he said, 'I'll bet I know who it is.' But he wouldn't ask me your name, and I didn't get his. I'm goin' forward tonight with the bunch to the ditches, or I'd fetch him up. Well, so long, honey! If the Heinies don't strafe me, I'll see you again."

He could call her "honey" because he was on his way, and she was the last sweet perhaps in his life. He left her all of a twitter. Somebody from Chesham was in the Engineers!

The Engineers were very important. Every girl in Marot knew that if they did not get the road fixed for the heavy artillery, the Germans could never be bombarded out of their jungles and caverns.

Who could it be? It couldn't be Percy Van Ruyper, or Stade Duyckinck, or any of the country club boys. They were with the Chesham company of infantry. So was Tom Pike. So it couldn't be Tom Pike.

But it was Tom Pike, though he did not present himself before her. Even while the Engineers were building their way through the village and on beyond, he kept aloof from the hut. He had guessed that the girl from Chesham was Joan, but had no reason to believe that she would not snub him again, if she saw him.

If he asked her for a cup of cocoa or a pack of cigarettes, she would probably fling them in his face. So he alone kept away from the hut, and the very self-denial endeared Joan to him as something unattainable and therefore to be desired.

He often stood in the dark or behind a crowd staring at her squandering smiles on everybody but him. He saw her dancing with many a man rougher than he had ever been. It grieved him strangely to be the only outcast from her presence.

In the meanwhile Joan and the other girls were busy with a sideline to their war work—being made love to.

Some paid court at a pathetic distance. Others made love by proxy, telling the present victim about the perfections of the absent fiancée or wife. Numbers of these, with the most innocent intentions (perhaps), tried to keep their hand in with a few sly caresses or fervid compliments. How could the girls rebuke them?

There was no lack, in such a host, of unscrupulous adventurers who thought an American girl in France as legitimate a prey as a French girl in France or an American girl at home. These tried to overpower or decoy the weary, lonely, amiable women. They did not always

fail, for it was not easy to forget even these rascals were heroes not likely to live much longer.

There were many who fell madly in love at first sight and were furiously sincere as long as the girl was visible. They pleaded, praised, wept or railed with a sincerity no less ardent for being merely temporary.

Joan was the target of all the sorts. At home she had been able to fool with a flirt or leave him alone, mock a desperately infatuated man or give him a run for his life.

But over here she had lost her pride and her scorn, and she was deeply touched by every suitor. The work at the Y was not always exacting. Now and then there were evenings free and Joan found that they had in France a moon that spoke the same language as in America.

At a time when the homeliest girl in the Y was besought by innumerable suitors, Joan was by no means neglected—and by no means neglectful.

She had the modern idea—which is simply the ancient idea frankly acknowledged—that a little love talk does no harm, a little petting is good exercise, and that the most burning kisses wash off leaving no stain.

More than once she permitted an officer, a non-commissioned officer, or a private to tell her what she knew already:—that she was the

most wonderful girl in the world. When they assured her that she had them hung dying on the barbed wire in No Man's Land, and begged her either to kiss them or kill them, she was merciful.

She usually consented to save a priceless life at so low a cost, feeling that killing Americans was the German's business not hers, and that she was really doing the work of a Red Cross nurse in administering anodynes to patriots in anguish.

One day when the work had slackened a little she glanced out into the square and saw Tom Pike gazing at her. She looked away in a flurry. Chesham had come to Marot at last, but in the person of Tom Pike.

Evidently he still remembered how harshly she had treated him, and he dared not come near. That was properly meek of him, but rather nice, too. And she had promised his mother that she would look after him.

She stole another glance. He was still there. He was handsomer than she remembered. The war had matured him, taught him to use his feet and his head, given him authority. Yet for all the hero he was, he was very much afraid of Joan.

That was delicious. She looked straight at him and bowed. He saluted her and bowed, but

stood fast. She beckoned. He was puzzled. She beckoned more vigorously. He came to her. She gave him her hand and nearly lost it in the sudden violence of his clench.

She offered to sell him something. He offered to buy anything she wanted to sell. He paid liberally for things he did not want.

A few soldiers and girls were dancing. She could see that his eyes followed them and came back to her with yearning. He spoke to her as a dog speaks, with sad looks and meaningful stares. But he could not ask. So at length she said:

"How would you like to dance?"

"I'd love it, but I'm afraid I might trip again and let you fall."

She pretended to have forgotten, and then to remember with a laugh:

"I'm sure it was my fault. I probably dragged you down. Will you give me another chance?"

"Oh, Lord, will I?"

He bolted for the dance-space. She joined him, stepped into his arms. He was frightened to death, yet she could tell that he was a different man. Being out of practice, he did not dance so well as at Chesham, yet he danced better. He had gained something mysterious that made her respect him and like him. After the

dance she introduced him to the Other Y-folk as an old friend from Chesham.

They plainly admired him and told him that he had saved Joan's face and the good name of her town. He was emboldened to ask her to dance again. She consented. They were friends now.

That night at closing time he was waiting to walk home with her. She asked him about his mother. He was horribly ashamed that he had not written, but the Engineers were being driven very hard.

She made him promise to come to the hut and write the next day. He walked to her quarters with her. The Engineers would soon be out of Marot. He would not see her again.

That saddened them both. They walked very slowly, with many pauses, talking softly, softly not to disturb the poor people who were asleep.

When Tom had gone, she thought of him with a baffling tenderness. He was from her home town. He might never go back again, or he might go back a shattered cripple to his poor mother. Joan had come to think of him with a warmth all the greater for its strangeness.

The next day he appeared at the hut with his eyes proclaiming a burning longing for her. Confused, and as if calling in a chaperon to protect her, she said:

"Have you written your mother yet?"

"I'm a yellow dog. No."

"Then sit down and write her now."

Obediently he sat to a table and started a letter. An orderly came to him and gave him a message. He rose and said to Joan:

"Good Lord, I've got to go out to the new bridge we're building. I can't get back for I don't know how long."

She was surprised to find how shocked she was. In self-defense, she stammered:

"I'll finish your letter for you, and send it."

"God bless you! Tell mother a few nice lies about me, won't you?"

"I'll do my best. I've had a lot of practice."

He smiled sadly, started to go, returned, fumbled for her hand.

"There's something I'd like to say when—if—I get back."

"What?"

"I—I'd better wait."

He seemed unable to let her hand go and that silly grin was back on his face. Only, now it touched Joan. It was the look he wore when he told his mother goodby. It must mean something.

He dashed off. She sat down to the letter he had begun. His opening line was childish enough:

"Dearest mother:

Who do you suppose is here in Marot?——"

She guessed what he had been about to say to his mother. She had guessed what he wanted to say when—if—if!—he got back.

CHAPTER XI

He wooed her best in his absence. Between Marot and the present enemy line lay miles of battle-wilderness, the highways and railroad blown to pieces, the trench lines mined and shattered, the whole ground in such shape that advance and coordination of effort were almost impossible, for every position was known to the Germans, had been held by them for years, and was carefully mapped and ranged for bombardment and recapture.

Tom was out there doing his best to repair the worst gaps in the road and the most vital bridges so that the heavy artillery could be rushed in when it came—if it came.

In America everybody believed that the home troops were invincible and the war a mere walk-over. That was a good thought for mothers to hold, so Joan wrote the blithest letter she could to the forlorn little woman whose bread and butter, not to mention her happiness, depended on the return of a safe and sound Tom Pike:

"Dear Mrs. Pike:

"Poor Tom has begun a hundred letters to you, but the colonels and generals can't seem to do without him. That's why they keep him back here where there's no danger at all.

"I am taking good care of him and he is perfectly well, except for being very sick—homesick. He talks of you all the time and sends you worlds of love.

"Devotedly,

"Joan Morgan."

The news from the front came back worse and worse. Even so close to the line, nearly everything was heard except the facts. The lies and unintentional fables were full of contradictions, but they agreed in one thing. The American line was not going forward.

The map on the wall where the girls shifted pins at every bit of news, showed at no place a single pin advancing, except here and there where one jutted out so far that even the girls could see that this lone pin or that was in danger of being cut off and were relieved when they could pull it back among its fellows.

Some of the new divisions were withdrawn at a time of crisis which led to wild stories of demoralization. Reports that certain generals were transferred looked like polite concealment of disgrace. But it would be years before any-

body could find out the truth or dare to publish it.

The worst of it was the new German trick called "infiltration." Specially trained bodies of picked veterans would fight holes in the allied line, seep through and then strike from the flank and rear.

Suddenly the engineers widening a bridge north of Marot well back of the front trenches saw before them hordes of graybacks that seemed to have sprung from the ground.

The engineers dropped their picks and shovels and seized rifle. But they were not entrenched against assault, and they had not been much schooled in battle. They were so few, too, that the military police, the orderlies, the members of the band, the clerks, the drivers of the one-mule ration carts and water wagons, even the cooks caught up rifles and wiggled on their stomachs, firing as they could.

Reinforcements pushed up from Marot met troops drawn back from the front line and the Germans were squeezed out but only after heavy losses among the engineers. The wounded were brought back first and the sight of them terrified Joan. She had seen enough torn and tattered bodies to regard them with a certain gripped emotion, but the Engineers were different. Among them was the Chesham

man. She watched with fierce anxiety, peering into litters and turning away sickened at what bayonets, gas, shells and bullets could do to what was once a gay young man.

Expecting every next man to be Tom, she unconsciously wrought herself into a state of intense devotion to him. For days she was kept in an agony of fear that he was lying somewhere dead and rotting as thousands had done, or crawling about somewhere. She could hardly resist the tug at her feet to run into the fields and hunt for him.

Fear wore her down now worse than toil, but she did not even see Tom when he returned with only a scratch on his forehead hidden in a rather becoming bandage that had the air of a Grecian fillet.

When he pushed his way through the crowd that was bombarding her with demands for this, that, and everything, the strings of her heart were so relaxed and frayed that even when they were twanged with an ecstasy of relief, they gave forth only a dull plunk:

"Hello, Tom! Back, eh? And you got a blighty!"

That was all she said, and a pretty thing to say to a young man just escaped from hell! And of all things to call his wound a "blighty"! which meant that she supposed he would take

it as an excuse to get back to a field hospital.

She could have bitten her tongue out, and she saw that her tone hurt him. She could not know how deeply, for, in his absence, his fancy had been found free scope. He had been imagining her in love with him, and had fought with an added bravery for the girl he was protecting.

Tears had filled his eyes as he imagined her torn with anxiety and fading away with grief —for him. Yet when he ran to the hut, broke through the crowd and presented himself before her, she laughed casually: "Back, eh?" She credited him with a "blighty." She probably suspected him of faking the wound.

That grin came back. He met her with a reply of equally fierce indifference:

"Yeah, I had to come back. I ran out of cigarettes."

They must have been madly in love with each other, for he was cut to the heart by the mere lack of rapture in her welcome, and she wanted to die because he answered with flippancy.

Joan passed the cigarettes across the counter in a trance and Tom swept them off and turned his back on her.

And now Joan went about her tasks with a heart dead in her. It seemed the day would never end. She had offended the wounded man from Chesham. What else mattered?

Night found her in a blur, hearing voices far away, groping through a cloud of obstacles. A fearsome hyena of a man asked her to sell him a cake of violet-scented soap.

"Violet-scented soap," she echoed, and thought of her porcelain tub at home—of hot water steaming—of fragrant salts sprinkled on the bubbles—of snowdrift towels—of a bath-mat like warm snow to pink feet—of filmy silks to enfold her—of her great dreamy bed at home—of home.

She leaned against the shelves and slept a moment, woke with a wrench, and found her hand on a plug of chewing tobacco. She offered one to the hyena. He had had troubles of his own; he growled:

"Hell, lady, do you call that vi'lut soap?"

She shook herself, apologized, and gave him what he ordered.

Old Mrs. Dixon's nerves were shredding, too. She snapped:

"If you can't wait on these poor boys any better 'n that, go chop some kindling wood. The fire's most out."

Joan drifted away like a sleepwalker, mumbling:

"Chop kindling wood? How do you chop kindling wood?"

One of the girls shook her and put the short

axe in her hand. Later Mrs. Dixon found her leaning against the wall outside sound asleep, and ordered her home as a useless encumbrance.

As she left the hut, somebody took her by the arm. She looked up startled, and gasped: "Tom!" in an eminently satisfactory tone. She leaned on him still more pleasantly.

She would have leaned on anybody then, but he interpreted it as the answer to his longing. He grew so bold as to slip his arm around her. She did not object to that even.

As they passed the churchyard he found a shadowed embrasure with a kind of seat in it, and paused to ask her if she would not sit down a while and listen to something he had to say. She would have sat down almost anywhere with almost anybody, but he did not know that.

In his struggle to tell her how he loved her, before it was too late, he did not even realize that he had little more than a dead woman to talk to.

He spoke of how unworthy he was of her, how worthy she was of the love of the greatest:

"I might get killed, but I want you to know I died loving you. If I get back alive to America I'll find all the jobs taken. It will be years before I can earn much of anything that

you would call anything. But I had to tell you."

His message penetrated her sleep. She understood that he loved her. It was like a blissful dream. She tried to tell him so, but he rushed along so fast now that he was started that she could not break in, and she kept floating away into oblivion. Her eyelids would not stay open.

She braced her elbows against the stone, put her fingers about her eyes to hold them ajar—and fell asleep with her eyes wide and glazed.

At length when Tom had finished explaining how hopeless he knew his love was, he found her head drooped on his shoulder. Her lips were upturned to his beseeching a kiss. What could he do?

He kissed her and claimed her and blessed her for loving him. He begged her to tell him that she did. She did not answer. Was she then too shy to speak the word? He kissed her again—on the lips.

Her lips did not answer, nor yet flinch away. He pleaded for a word. Her head fell back. He saw that she had been sound asleep all the while.

"I pour out my heart to you and it puts you to sleep!" he laughed, "Well, that's answer enough."

He thought bitterly what a fool he had been. He tried to wake her, but she was gone. He picked her up and carried her the rest of the way, set her down before her door, and knocked on it until Katie Dugan answered. He called through:

"Come get your friend. She's all in."

Joan had a drunken look as he left her there.

And that reminded Tom. To be drunk was to be out of one's misery. Nothing could be easier. He staggered along the dark lanes trying to check the wild laughter welling up in him.

CHAPTER XII

When Katie opened the door, Joan fell into her arms. Katie sniffed her breath suspiciously, but understood, carried her to her cot, took off her shoes, spread the blanket over her, and toppled into her own cot.

In the morning Joan woke in a perfect condition for a good long illness, nervous prostration, or any of the luxuries of peace. Vague memory was her only stimulant. She sat up sharply and demanded:

"Where's Tom?"

"Not here, sure, with two virtuous females," said Katie.

Joan sprang from the bed, dashed water in her face and tried to explain to Katie what must have happened:

"I've simply got to find him and tell him I love him."

"It's delirious you are," said Katie. "If you don't report for dooty, you'll hear tellin'."

Joan was not yet ready, when Katie left her. She seemed unable to find her wits. The work

at the Y hut seemed unimportant. The needs of the army were nothing. Tom Pike was everything.

When at last she was out in the street she had not gone far when she met him. He was holding himself up by the walls of the houses along the road. He was blind drunk, and trying to find his way to her door to tell her that he was only joking when he said he loved her.

Joan ran to him and caught him as he wavered for a fall. She was not disgusted, or afraid of him. She thought only of keeping him from disgrace and harm. She looked about for help. A few French villagers peered from windows. They did not regard drunken men with the homage and the protective emotion displayed by Americans.

There was only one thing for Joan to do, to steer him to her quarters. He was too far gone to know who led him or where. It was not easy to keep him from breaking his neck on the cellar stairs but she got him down somehow, and into her room.

He fell across her cot as if he were a corpse. But she had seen enough young men in such condition to know that the best thing for him was to let him sleep it off. The strangest thing to her was her lack of indignation or contempt. She felt for him as if he were wounded in a

A United Artists Picture. *She Goes to War.*

THE SCARS OF BATTLE HEALED, JOAN FINDS HER TRUE LOVE AGAIN.

battle, and so found him pitiful. She even imagined the truth, that she had broken his heart by falling asleep in his presence. Now let him have his sleep in hers, while she saw to it that none of his officers found him in this condition.

She loosened his collar so that he would not choke. She took off his belt and his pistol holster and laid them on a chair. She locked him in, hid the key in the usual place, and hurried to the Y hut.

There was a strange scurry everywhere. The air was alive with planes. A German "circus" was sweeping the allied planes out of the sky.

A bombshell fell from one of the planes, and vanished in a roof somewhere. A mass of timber and stone flew up into the air as if from an explosion underground. The heavens were filled with the faint racket of machine guns. Another bomb crashed. An airship wavered, flamed out, spun to earth like a blazing leaf.

Joan was much too excited to be afraid, though the streets were all but empty. Everybody that could get into a cellar was scurrying to cover. Officers ordered Joan to an *abri*. They seized her and drove her back to her room where she listened to the warfare of the gods and wondered if the next thunderbolt might not end her troubles.

Tom slept like a philosopher calmly permitting the sky-people to settle their own affairs. He was more terrifying to Joan in her panic than all the hub-bub outside.

When the cloud skirmish ended and the silence returned with a peculiar beauty all its own, Joan wondered what she could do for Tom. She could not think for him because she was not a soldier, and she had only the vaguest notion of what a soldier would do for another in such an emergency.

She sat and beat her brains for ideas. Suddenly she struck a spark. The name of Percy Van Ruyper occurred to her. Back there at home when she had asked Percy to beat up Tom Pike to oblige her, he had gasped at the sacrilege.

Percy Van Ruyper was not with the engineers but there must be some friend of Tom's who would give her advice and not expose Tom to whatever punishment awaited a drunken officer. It would probably be shooting at sunrise. She had heard of officers who had been removed in disgrace from their outfits and transferred to the rear to do paper work for the rest of the war.

She hesitated a long while over entrusting anyone with so perilous a secret. But she was

desperate for counsel. She locked Tom in again and stole down the street.

There was life enough there now, but in all the multitude she could not find one of Tom's engineers. All she found was someone to tell her that they had marched off immediately after the air-raid ended.

She was thunderstruck by the news. Tom here, drunk—his outfit far away, wondering no doubt where he could be, calling him a coward perhaps for hiding while they moved to the front. She dared not speak to a soul. She broke into her room and found Tom where she had left him. She called to him, knelt by him, shook him, screaming:

"Tom, your regiment is going into battle. You'll never forgive yourself if you're not there. Wake up."

She had reached the point women reach at such a crisis, of imploring her beloved to go out with the rest and face death. A snore was his answer. She wrung her hands helplessly, tried to wake him by slapping cold water over his clenched eyelids. He only rolled over and hid his face and struck out at her, snorting with rage.

She decided to ask Katie Dugan's advice, and ran into the street. The town was a whirl-

pool of activity. Its narrow street was a bottleneck for the floods of men trying to crowd through to the front. Herds of five-ton trucks creaked past, turning out for uncouth and monstrous tanks. Mobs of infantry tried to steal through in the gaps, dodging the grinding wheels and the zooming motorcycles. Staff cars honked and swerved. Three-inch field pieces went by like long-necked prehistoric reptiles drawn backward. Captains, lieutenants, sergeants ran bawling trying to keep their units together. Signal Corps reel carts with huge spools of telephone wire jammed into one-mule machine gun carts, ambulances, combat wagons.

The big guns arrived and were hauled across the precarious pavements threatening to knock the houses down with their muzzles. They were bigger than the elephants of Hannibal and more cumbersome. In and out among them sped more trucks, scampering soldiery, mule teams, trucks, trucks, trucks, carts, machine guns, motorcycles, soldiers, staff cars, big guns, Signal Corps carts, searchlight trucks, combat wagons, ammunition, ammunition, ammunition —all in a panic of flight from the danger of missing their chance to be torn to shreds by the enemy.

Outside the town the flood could spread out,

the tanks could take the center of the road, the artillery find its way as best it could, while the soldiers hopped across the muddy fields alongside.

Joan's heart was wrung with a mad desire to join the men, but she knew that she would only be seized and thrown back. She was frenzied with grief for Tom, understanding what it would mean to him when he came back from where he was and learned that he had turned up absent without leave or excuse in the supreme hour.

But she was seized by Mrs. Dixon and forced to do her work at the Y hut. She could not know how Tom fared until after dark, and then she had to run away when she was sent out to fetch in wood for the chocolate cauldron.

The streets were still a cataract of men and guns. She ran with her lantern glimmering at her ankles, fell and had to light it again, found her key and flung open the door.

Tom was mumbling, tottering about in a half-stupor, wondering where he was. He could hardly recognize her when she held the lantern up to his bleary face. With bloodshot eyes he peered at her, and burbled:

"Whass masser? Why'm I in jail? Whass goin' on?"

Before she thought she gasped:

"Oh, Tom, Tom, the battle's on. Your regiment went forward early this morning."

Discipline had so schooled his thoughts that the machine of his mind began to work.

"M' rezhment went into ba'lle 's morn' and me not wit' 'em? Imposs'le. Don' be sill'."

He laughed so insolently that she forced the truth into his brain. Then he cried:

"They're fight'n'! Whynt you tell me? Lea' me out."

He lunged forward and fell over a chair. She knelt by him.

"Tomorrow you'll be all right, dear. You can't go now. You'd never find your way. You'd be run over and killed in the street."

He shook her off:

"Lea' me 'lone. Go back to sleep. Wha' you care wha' I do? You 'n' love me. You 'n' care if I get shot for cowar'ce."

He swung up to his feet, wavered and sprawled. He crept to the can of water and emptied it on his head. He spoke a little more clearly:

"God gimme back my brain. Help me!"

But his feet were still drunk. His knees were willow. He sat awhile in silence fighting for his wits, thinking aloud:

"I ought to be shot for this like a coward. Old colonel hates cowards. So do I!"

He clenched his head in his hands, beat his skull with his fists. He stared at Joan with a hangdog stupidity:

"Joan. I love you. You don't love me. But don't let 'em court martial me."

"I won't," she said. "I won't, honey. You just stay here till you're yourself, then we'll find a good explanation, honey. I'll make up a good lie. The war won't end tonight. There's time enough."

He would not be coddled. He roared:

"They're fighting now. My men. And me not there! They won't know what to do. My men bein' killed—and me here—in a woman's room—drunk! I crossed the sea for this—for this! They ought to stand me in front of a wall, blindfolded. But I won't be disgraced. If Germans won't shoot me, I know who will."

He clapped his hand to where his holster belonged. It was not there. He looked about. He saw it on the chair where Joan had put it. He started for it on hands and knees. She whirled and snatched it up.

"Gimme 'at!" he demanded.

"No."

He followed her about like a quadruped. She made for the door. He headed her off. She fell back. He came after. She dodged behind her cot. He clambered over it. She thought to

terrify him. She ripped off the holster, and levelled the pistol at him.

"Keep away, or I'll shoot you myself. I won't let you go out and disgrace yourself, I tell you!"

He stared at her. Then he laughed only half-drunkenly:

"You don't even know how to fire the damn thing."

"Oh, don't I?"

She slid the sleeve back deftly, then released the safety catch with her thumb:

"I'm a dead shot."

"But you wouldn't shoot me."

"Wouldn't I?"

"Naw. Give me my gun and I'll save you the trouble."

He came on again, wavering but sinister, wolfish. She backed away pleading:

"Tom, don't make me."

"Gimme 'at gun!"

There was something so professional in the way she brought the barrel up to her eye, that he paused:

"You wouldn't shoot me."

She answered grimly:

"That's just what I am going to do."

He laughed and advanced. She stepped close to him and fired under his outstretched hand.

A patch of his blouse flew off. He was knocked down. He felt the blood shooting from his flesh.

He gazed at her in wonderment greater than his thought of death. Trying to lift his head, he faltered:

"So you've killed me! You hate me—that much? Well! Well!——"

She fell to her knees.

"I tried to save you. I love you! Oh, I love you!"

CHAPTER XIII

Tom's eyes were dulling with shock and bewilderment. He could hardly hear what Joan was crying aloud, and he was passing away in a swoon, grinning feebly to think what a funny way this was to die.

He had drilled and drilled and crossed the ocean, only to be shot down by the girl who had refused to finish a dance with him at home. At home! His mother would never see him again. She would starve.

His mind tore itself from the drowning peace and he mumbled:

"First aid—kit—pocket."

Joan ransacked his pockets and found the bandage. She darted to find her own scissors, and slashed away at his clothes until she had bared his side. From a red well in his white flesh the blood gurgled and spread.

She tore open the package, stuffed the bandage into the wound and bound the long tapes around his body, wincing when she touched his naked flesh.

He nodded as he went out, and seemed to fall asleep. She was afraid alone there. Was he dying?

Only now could she understand her plight. To run for help was the first thing, but the surgeon would say: "Who is this man? What is he doing here? He has been drinking. He was just coming out of a drunk. Who shot him. Why?"

If she answered any of these questions Tom would be exposed to contempt, ridicule, disgrace.

In trying to save him from himself, she had plunged him into far worse dangers. She must lie him out of it, somehow. But how?

She dared not leave him. She dared not stay and let him die.

She beat her forehead with the heel of her hand. Confusion ruled her thoughts. Every plot she laid broke down the moment she imagined herself under cross-examination.

Any surgeon could tell that Tom was wounded by a bullet. If it had only been a shell-wound, she could say that he was struck by a fragment from one of the bombs dropped by the planes that raided Marot that morning. But a bullet—who had fired a pistol-shot at him?

She sat bathing his hot forehead with cold

water, placing a pillow under his head and wondering, wondering.

Footsteps sounded on the cellar stairs, heavy steps. Katie Dugan came in, gaped at the form on the floor, gasped:

"For the love o'— Who's your fri'nd?"

"Captain Pike."

"Is it asleep he is?"

"He's wounded."

"The creature. Is he hurted bad?"

"Very!"

"How did he come by it?"

"I shot him."

"Mother o'—holy—may the—what the—and why would you be shootin' a man?"

"Because I love him."

"L'ave me sit down to this. I'm hearin' quare. My head's been sizzlin' ahl day like a doughnut fryin'. Say it over again slow. You shot him because you love him. Well, women has different ways of expressin' their feelin's. I'd hate to think what you'd done to the lad if you hated him."

Before Joan had told her story, Tom began to moan and twitch. His eyes discovered Joan crouched at his side. He gritted his teeth. He recognized who she was.

She bent close and told him everything that had happened, and why. He smiled a little

when she told him how she loved him and how determined she was to save him. The series of lies that she had tried to invent began to come to her as she talked:

"Do you understand me? This morning there was an air-raid. You were hurrying to your company. A piece of shell cut you down. A woman dragged you into a cellar—for shelter—a Frenchwoman—you didn't know her name—she bound you up, and left you—she didn't come back. Maybe she was killed. Do you understand? Then somebody dragged you out into the street and you fainted. Can you remember all that?"

He smiled cynically. She was afraid of both his memory and his conscience. She belabored him with arguments:

"The reason I shot you was to save you from shooting yourself. I only wanted to wound you to save you from killing yourself. If you tell them you were shot tonight, they'll say, 'Where were you all day while your company was fighting? They'll say, 'What were you doing at the rear?'"

His eyes filled with tears of shame. He closed them on a deeper pain than his wound could give. Joan pleaded:

"Oh, don't blame yourself. It was my fault. I love you, but I was so tired that I fell asleep.

I love you for loving me enough to be hurt so badly by my—by what seemed indifference. But I was drugged with sleep. I tried to hold my eyes open with my fingers, but I went to sleep anyway. You carried me home.

"You must carry me through life. I don't want to live if you don't get well. If any harm or disgrace comes to you through this, it will be all my fault and I'll die. I won't live unless you do. Do you hear me? Do you understand?"

The look in his eyes answered more than Yes. She bent and kissed him.

"Now will you obey me?"

He pursed his lips for a bribe. She paid it.

"Remember, then! I don't dare keep you here. Katie and I are going to put you out on the walk and then tell a surgeon that we found you there.

"When he comes you tell him it was a shell wound. He'll say it's a bullet wound, but he'll never find the bullet. There it is on the floor. It went in and out and I'm going to keep it all my life.

"When the surgeon says it was a bullet wound, you tell him he's a liar. They don't mind wounded men losing their temper. You tell him he's a damned liar. Ask him if he was there. And—oh, but you're getting cold! It's

so damp and chilly here and wounded people ought to be kept warm. Come on, Katie, help me with him. Put that blanket round him."

Katie protested:

"It has a Y on it."

"Then Tom can say a Y girl put it over him. No, I'll tell the surgeon I found him and put it round him. Let me begin the lying. And now, Tom, you remember. For my sake and your mother's you do as I tell you and stick to your story through thick and thin. And in a few days you'll be well enough to go back in and get another German wound to add to the one on your forehead and the one I gave you.

"Or maybe you can get killed since you seem to have your heart set on that. But you've got to be killed by the enemy, not by yourself or me. Do you understand? And now goodby again till I see you. As soon as you're well send me word, for I'll be here."

She and Katie wrapped him in the blanket. Then she ran up the steps and peered down the street. There was great excitement in the square, and all the people were watching the throng.

She hurried back to her room and lifted Tom's feet while Katie carried his torso with ease, keeping him level while Joan climbed ahead. They toted him down the curved lane

as far as they dared, then stretched him against the wall of a ruined house. Joan knelt and tucked the blanket about him and kissed him goodby again and again, and made him promise to follow the crazy libretto she had composed for him, then ran toward the scene of the confusion. It was like a circus parade going through a town at night, men, horses, mules and great guns looking more than ever like elephants with swollen trunks.

But now a double line was squeezing through the streets—ambulances full of wounded and dying, limping soldiers and limping mules and horses—the red waste trickling away from the field of battle.

In a byway a few surgeons had set up a relief station and emergency operating tables for desperate cases—a ghastly little butcher shop.

Joan ran forward, then fell back at what she saw. She began to reel but clenched herself together. It would never do for her to faint now. What a man could stand she could stand.

She caught a surgeon by the elbow:

"Please, I found a wounded officer lying in the street up here. He's been there a long while. You must come see him."

"I'm very busy here, Miss."

"But a little delay will kill the officer.

You've got to do something for him right away. You've got to!"

He made her wait till he finished the frightful task he was at, and bestowed a bundle of flesh in a waiting motor-ambulance. There was one vacant place. Joan noted that with a touch of ague.

Then the surgeon called two litter-bearers and followed Joan to where Tom lay still. He knelt, whipped away the blanket and the clothes, looked at the bandage, felt Tom's pulse, asked him what had happened.

Joan leapt in with her own story as she had planned it. The surgeon may have thought it all a trifle mixed, but he was busy, and he remembered that there were others in need of attention, took out of his case a hypodermic needle, filled it, drove it home beneath Tom's skin and pressed out the contents, before he withdrew the hollow dagger.

"What's that?" Joan gulped.

"Antitetanus serum."

"What's it for?"

"To keep him from having lockjaw."

"Oh my God!"

The surgeon rose and signalled the litter men to pick Tom up, then began asking him questions that Joan answered for him.

He made the record that Captain Thomas Pike had been disabled by shell-wound and shipped back to the nearest base hospital. He explained. "It's better for me not to move that bandage now. We'll get him into the next ambulance going back. It's heated and he won't suffer a chill. They'll take care of him better at the field hospital and then ship him to the evacuation hospital, where he'll have the best of everything. Thank you ladies for your attention to him."

He dashed away to the ugliest and noblest of jobs. The stretcher was about to follow, but Joan checked it to rearrange the blanket about Tom and had such difficulty in tucking it under his back that she had to bend over until her cheek touched his lips.

"Goodby—T— Goodby, Captain Pike," she said.

She wanted to run after it again as it was carried off at a jog trot. But Katie seized her and held her.

Watching Tom helpless in danger, and borne to unknown dangers, Joan's wild staring eyes were drowned in tears and she sobbed:

"Oh, Katie, Katie, when he kissed me, his lips were like ice! Do you think he'll die? Do you suppose he'll get gangrene? or have a hemorrhage?"

"It's yourself that had the himoridge. Such a flow of talk I never heard in my time."

Katie talked down Joan's hysteric fright and got her to her room. It was cold for a worn-out girl with no blanket and nothing warmer to think of than poor Tom jouncing over that frightful road on a shelf of that unthinkable ambulance. She fell asleep because her last drop of strength was drained. As soon as she was quiet Katie rose, spread her own blanket over Joan, put on her uniform, her overcoat, her raincoat, her shoes and her hat, and crept back to shiver herself to sleep in earthquakes of chill.

The next morning Katie was glad to be up and stirring her congealed blood. She could hardly bring herself to wake Joan to her misery, but she did.

All day Joan was in an anguish imagining Tom in that hideous ambulance with those other poor soldiers. Suddenly she decided that by this time he was probably lying in clean sheets in a white bed in a château with a beautiful Red Cross nurse bathing him and his wounds. And strangely this charming vision did not cheer her in the least.

She went on constructing pictures of herself as Tom saw her, dirty, dishevelled, fiendishly shooting him down and contrasting those pic-

tures with the Red Cross angel in snowy robes who relieved his pain and caressed his brow with her lily palm.

She cursed the whole throng and was sure that of the more than ten thousand American Red Cross nurses, Tom would draw the most perfect specimen of infernal grace.

She was not comforted by the thought that to those ten thousand Yankee angels the two hundred and thirty-four thousand Yankee wounded to whom they ministered were only what the two million hungry soldiers were to the Y girls—customers at a bargain-counter, where the rush was so great that the poor saleswomen were always in a state of wreckage.

CHAPTER XIV

Vast numbers of bulky volumes have been filled with the chronicles of the World War in every aspect except the unparalleled traffic in all phases of love.

Millions of women and millions of men thrown out of the disorderly enough processes of everyday life into a state of international frenzy were shuffled together in relations where every old standard was reversed or somehow altered. Hatred was love, love was treason, mercy was infamy, tolerance was conspiracy, prudence cowardice, delicacy brutality, modesty indecency. Everything was something that it had never been before. And nobody could believe that it would ever again be what it had been.

Personal histories were made in homes and gardens, camps and billets, countrysides and cities, hospitals and battlefields, everywhere, but they will never be written, can never be written and are already forgotten except in the startled casual recollections of obscure mo-

ments when some frightened soul whispers to itself, "Can that have been I? Does God himself know and will he remember?"

When the war ended there followed a morning-after of amazement, remorse, inability to settle back into old virtues, comformities, hypocrisies and industries. But gradually the world, like a sobered drunkard, resumed its workaday habits, and changed its fervent "Never Again!" to an assured and forgetful, "It was impossible. It never happened."

There were French girls and women of all ages, too, who told Joan stories that sickened her. There were American women and women of all nations who went through the fires of Moloch and perished or returned seared in soul and memory.

Joan sometimes wondered if war were not a minor matter. She was so aloof from the problems of the generals and the scenes of battle that they played but a small part in her thoughts. She and her companions saw the soldiers only outside office hours. The impression most of them gave was of an enormously increased interest in women. There was infinitely more courtship than at home, so much longing, such manifest desire, such hunger for flirtation or more than that the whole expedition of millions of Americans to France

sometimes looked like a vast picnic, a May festival of amorous excitement.

She had done and was doing and would do none of the things she came overseas to do. She and her companions and friends were receiving proposals by the wholesale over here in the backwash of battle. She could imagine what was going on in Paris and in the convalescence centers.

She herself had fallen in love with the last man she would have chosen and they had already gone through moments that she could never have foreseen.

Even Katie Dugan had a lover. She was so tall and so hilarious or so wrathful that most of the soldiers were afraid of her, or at least of being seen with her. They called her Big Bertha, and the thought of a moonlight stroll at her elbow was not to be entertained. So the poor girl pined and her pride suffered wounds that she never exposed. Her heart was as big as it had to be to carry her bulk, and it was as tender as it was strong. She yearned to be called sweet names and to sit on a soldier's knee. But such knees were not being made, it seemed, so Katie did more than her share of the thousand doughnuts a day turned out by her kitchen, not to mention the hundred pies.

She had little reason for loving the men who

would not love her. When the old lady who wore a steel helmet as if it were a sunbonnet praised the soldiers, remembering her own sons, and urged the girls to mother them, Katie would snort:

"Mother me foot! The back of me hand to the lot of them. I wouldn't marry one of them for worlds—not even if I was asked."

One day there came to the dugout a trombonist, who looked not unlike his own favorite instrument. A peaceable soul and an artist, he lacked the will to fight his way through the mobs buying doughnuts and pies. He grew so desperate that he crept round to the rear of the kitchen, crouching on hands and knees in the hope of stealing a few.

Katie saw his lean hand appear and clutched the wrist of it, dragging him to his feet. She drew him out like a many-jointed telescope and could hardly believe her eyes.

"Stop growin', you giraff," she gasped.

He looked down at her and begged:

"Don't deny me a doughnut, little one."

Katie collapsed:

"Murder in Irish! I've lived to be called 'Little.' "

She made him hold out his two hands and impaled a doughnut on each of his ten digits. He beamed:

"How much are they, cutie?"

"Did you call me 'cootie?' "

"Cutie, cutie!"

"Oh Gawd, how sweet that listens. They're nothin' to you, big man."

He began to munch while she adored, and he completed her conquest by murmuring an invitation to take a walk with him in the evening. She accepted with infantile meekness and watched him stalk away. Then she turned, seized one of the other lasses, and demanded:

"Julia dear, you know love? What's it like? Did first love hit you like a stummick-ache? or what?"

Julia could not remember so far back.

Providence lent Katie a moon that evening and she strolled with her cavalier. His name was Francis Navier Malloy, but he was generally known as "Toots."

She found her lord even more shy than his slave, for he, too, suffered isolation because of his stature. In the dark, however, they escaped attention and thought of themselves as two tiny love birds on the branch of a rose tree.

The next evening he brought along his trombone and made love to her in music, the long tube throbbing with a poetry he could not put in words. Now and then his passion overcame

him and he gave voice to certain blats that caused terror or rage in the entire neighborhood.

Then he and Katie would steal away to some other nook. But nearly all the nooks were preempted except the lighted ones, and when Toots played visibly he was greeted with cobblestones and worse. He had to cut short his concert but Katie had heard enough to fill her with an almost unique opinion that a trombonist was the ideal husband.

Katie had to tell Joan of her lover and Joan's heart was torn between pity and laughter. Neither emotion pleased the proud Katie and she felt called upon to administer a rebuke:

"Well, anyhow, he says he has never in his life a drop of drink taken, so I won't be havin' to shoot him to hould him."

"That's unkind!" said Joan, brought down to the dust from her lofty patronage.

"That was my intintion," said Katie, "I'm sorry for sayin' it, but I'm glad I did. Women that has lovers should look to their own."

Joan apologized for the thoughts she had cherished and the friendship was not broken. But Katie's heart was, for Toots was marched away the next day to the North, where so many went that never came back.

She filled his knapsack with tear-stained

doughnuts and when he mumbled, "Fare ye well, Miss Dugan!" she moaned:

"Miss Dugan is all I'll ever be if you don't come back."

As he turned away she seized him again to plead:

"Oh, Mr. Malloy, promise me the one thing: when the shells and bullets are flyin', scrouge down as low as you can for you're twice the target of thim dwarves you march with."

The only bright thing in her world was the arrival of Sadie Slevsky with a vaudeville troupe of the Over There Theatre League. She had sung herself out in the raw weathers and had slept none too warm in the icy nights, and her cries of joy at meeting Joan and Katie were hardly more than a whispered croak. But when the show was on, she could always find voice enough to be heard, and her feet did not catch cold. Her pretty legs could twinkle and she rejoiced to be permitted to dance nearer and nearer to the firing line. Her companion, Tillie Lee, had been stricken with pneumonia and her new partner was a man.

The night of their arrival she and her band gave a performance in the biggest of the barns. The troupe included a magician, a female impersonator, a juggler, a chalk talker, and Sadie and her partner.

All the officers and soldiers, Y girls and men, Salvation lassies and men, Red Cross nurses, and all the villagers sat out in the square and revelled in the show. The applause for Sadie's dances was thunderous and everybody joined in when she sang:

"There's a long, long trail a-winding."

Her poor shred of a voice was not missed and she saved herself for the comic encore, sung with the trickiest of footwork:

"Good Morning, Mr. Zip—Zip—Zip,
With your hair cut just as short as mine.
Good Morning, Mr. Zip—Zip—Zip,
You're really lookin' fine.
Good Morning, Mr. Zip—Zip—Zip,
With your hair cut just as short as,
Your hair cut just as short as,
Your hair cut just as short as mine."

In the midst of her song the sky was filled with the snarling drum-roll of airplanes from the north. Every light was quenched and the audience sat in the gloom wondering what thunderbolts the heavens might send.

Sadie went right on singing. She was frightened almost unconscious, but the soldiers loved her the better for the shiver in her voice that went on wailing. She made only one slip. She sang:

"Good Morning, Mr. Zip—Zip—Zip,
With your life cut just as short as mine."

The airships dropped no more than a single bomb, and that landed in a quarter already so ruined that nobody paid any heed. The lights went on again and Sadie's beauty was not denied to the hungry eyes.

The troupe had planned to move on up to the front, but the danger was too great and they were forbidden to advance, so they stayed in Marot and gave matinees and evening performances every day.

Sadie took up her quarters with Katie and Joan who found an extra cot for her. It was wonderful to be together, but a war change had come over them.

CHAPTER XV

Joan wondered why Tom never wrote to her. Perhaps he had written often and his letters were lost in the colossal jumble of mail and supplies cluttering the roads to the front. Perhaps he was brooding over her cruelty and hating her for disabling him. Perhaps his wound was not healing and he was in a delirium, dying and calling for her. Perhaps her trick had been found out; some surgeon may have compared the report of a shell-wound with the neat puncture of a bullet and accused Tom of deception, forced a confession out of him and preferred charges against him.

He might be a prisoner and she would be months finding out. She went about her work in a daze while her mind juggled with riddles that had no answer.

She was denied the ecstasy of seeing Tom on the day when he passed through Marot on his way to rejoin his beloved engineers. He went forward in a staff-officer's car and there was no time to stop. He stood up and waved at

the Y hut as it slid past, but Joan was in the backyard chopping kindling wood, cursing the chore, and wondering why Tom never answered the letters that he never got.

By the time he reached his regiment it was far from Marot and its tasks were of the deadliest, building roads and bridges under fire.

The war went on all along the trenches to the sea. The Germans had made their gigantic thrust and could not quite drive it home. The allies had placed all their destinies in one command at last and Foch, the attacker, began the counter-drive, in the magnificent hope of blasting the whole German line out of France before the morose autumn failed and left his soldiers to a fifth winter in the icy misery of the trenches.

Foch gave to Pershing the honor of smashing the hinge of the German line. If he could break through there at the point nearest to the Vaterland, he could cut in back of the whole German army, and bag more than a million invaders in the greatest triumph of all time.

He could have done it too, but for the fact that the Germans had too many machine guns and he had too few—and too few men.

The line alloted to him was over-long for the use of only his best, and where they shattered

themselves against the all-but-impregnable barriers, he had to replace them with his second best, and these with his third best. Finally he had to throw in practically every private soldier he had in France, and to fight without reserves. Millions of Americans were in camp but on the wrong side of the ocean.

The regulars as always set a supreme standard and met it, and many of the National Guardsmen and the draft organizations reached the same heights. But inevitably hundreds, thousands of the lads who were hustled to the front were found wanting either in man-given training, war-given experience, or God-given guts.

The women in Marot heard what the home papers never learned, ugly stories of organizations that were "relieved" from the line before they had found time to warm their trenches, and of officers who were "transferred" to the other duties for reasons not published. The women felt sorry for the unfortunate, and sorrier for the brave who had to carry the extra burden.

The women felt sorry for themselves, too, for the first rush of the fresh troops drove the Germans out of their forward positions so far that Marot seemed almost as remote from the fighting zone as Paris or the Riviera or those

other gay and gorgeous places where the gentler arts of womanhood were practiced.

The Marot women wanted hungry men to feed. They loved muddy and bleeding and lousy customers, half-frozen from the trenches, or men smoking hot for the trenches. But they saw now only those who were far from danger.

They were driven frantic with reports that at many points there were bodies of troops who had not touched a morsel of food for days. Numberless rolling kitchens had been wrecked in the advance by German shells. Many of the cooks had been killed; one of them was found still bent over a pan of potatoes he was paring. Other cooks had deserted their pots for rifles. More kitchens were not to be had for the asking. All France was trying in vain to replenish the wastage of the four-hundred mile moving frontier.

Messengers on motorcycles and on foot kept dashing in to Marot to relay the cry for more ammunition, more supplies of every sort, especially food. These messengers stopped at the Y hut and at the Salvation Army dugout, and their appetities were as eloquent as the stories they told of the starvation up front.

Mrs. Dixon proposed to several generals or their staffs that she and her flock would like to

get forward into their usual neighborliness with the combat area. They were advised to stay where they were and watch the war go by. But Joan found a general who had known her father and she bullied him into giving the necessary order.

The next morning early there was a panic of preparation. Everything that could be made into sandwiches was cooked, sliced and breaded. Beans were baked. Doughnuts were heaped in pyramids. Pies were piled in towers. The village was ransacked for eggs and these were boiled hard.

Cocoa cannons like small locomotives with double cauldrons and a fireplace underneath them were filled with cocoa and fuel all ready to be set alight. Every available cart or automobile was pressed into service and packed to its capacity with washboilers full of coffee, with cartons of cigarettes, boxes of cookies, jars of preserves, pickles, candies.

They left Marot in high spirits, but their hearts fell sick as they pressed through a forest where fierce battles had been waged years before and old helmets rusted above heads that were hardly more than skulls. Old leaves had not quite shrouded all the uniforms that disclosed skeletons or forms less cleanly dead.

Shapeless lumps that had been soldiers,

halves of wheels, split cannon, discarded rifles, unexploded shells and shattered fragments of steel were everywhere.

From the new war in the North a line of ambulances and hobbling men flowed south. The wind whipped them with the carrion smell of slime that had once been sturdy youth or glossy horses lashed to their deaths in a bewilderment hardly greater than that of the men now dead who had lashed them.

The soldiers they passed felt that women did not belong in this upper Hades, but an urge was upon them to give their strength as if it were mother's milk and their children crying for it that they might become men.

Now and then a girl, gulping and clutching at her throat, turned aside to vomit, shaken with sobs of more than sorrow. But they pressed on to where they could see the shell-bitten steeple and the few crumpled houses that marked "Gournay of the Cows," Gournay-aux-Vaches. A throng of soldiers was billeted there, resting from a tour in the front line and waiting for the call to return and give death another chance at them.

At Mrs. Dixon's command and for the sake of making a resistlessly effective entrance, the burlesque reinforcement halted to light the cocoa cannons, and set the coffee cauldrons to

fuming. Then they moved on with chimneys sending up black flags of truce. They halted now and then, when they came to a splintered combat wagon or a rolling kitchen that had been rolled over, to gather more fuel for the roaring fires.

Joan made a model for sculptors or painters as she bent to pick up a fragment of wood, broke it to kindling across her uplifted thigh and bent again to thrust it into the oven flames. They lighted up a face aglow from within at the exaltation of going to war in a woman's own way.

And so the gipsy caravan reeled into Gournay-aux-Vaches, whose very ruins were ruined.

A gaunt company gathered about them, and one famished officer demanded:

"Why did you come out here, for Christ's sake?"

'For Christ's sake," said Mrs. Dixon echoing his blasphemy into a sermon. "We heard you were hungry so we brought you your supper."

Never were royal favorites toasted more fervidly than these flattered and terrified women. They felt that they had reached the highest peaks their lives would ever know, and would rather have perished where they stood than have missed the privilege of handing out sandwiches, doughnuts, jellies, preserves, pickles,

canned sardines, coffee, cocoa, to these rancid, foul-smelling, mud-caked walking skeletons in this stinking backyard of hell.

The girls would have wept with bliss but Mrs. Dixon kept stabbing them with that grim look of hers and her motto:

"Smile! smile! smile!"

Mrs. Dixon was all for moving on to the trenches. The senior officer sputtered coffee everywhere as he roared with laughter. He saved his face by a sudden stratagem:

"You've already fed the front line men, my dear lady. For we are expecting every moment the order to go forward and relieve the men that are there now. If you will give us what you can spare we'll protect it from gas and take it up with us. There goes the telephone buzzer now."

Another officer sprang from a cellar, saluted and reported that the word had come.

Joan ached to go forward, but she knew how useless such a prayer would be. She filled as many cups as she could carry to the most forlorn of the men. Sadie Slevsky gathered an armload of tobacco, and began to toss packages of cigarettes here and there.

And Katie Dugan, catching up a big tray stacked high with doughnuts, set it on her left palm and ran along the line with the skill of

her old days at Childs, setting a doughnut in every clutching hand.

The line turned into column of squads and marched away into what had been a noble forest on a noble hill and now looked like nothing so much as the neglected beard of a gigantic jaw.

CHAPTER XVI

The latest lurch of the Americans had thrown the Germans back into a position of the greatest comfort for defence and the utmost ticklishness for attack.

From a great Eastern and Western height a series of ridges ran South like the fingers of a hand—like a smaller edition of the great "Hand of Massiges." Such portions of the line as encountered finger tips had to scale rocks infested with machine-gun vermin.

Such troops as pushed up between the fingers were subject to fire from three sides and could not climb out without facing annihilation. They must wait till the ridges were taken from the front or until distant portions of the line advanced far enough to put the Germans in a sack and scare them out.

Some of the organizations attacked the finger tips with recklessness. Others were cautious. A few battalions having been repulsed with loss, refused to try again. The luckless commanders of these outfits were receiving blister-

ing orders from their superiors and could not obey them since their men could not be persuaded, overawed or bribed. Such things happened far oftener than the public learned from the censored press.

Joan's yearning was turned to frenzy when the anxious commander of the zone of communications insisted on all the women wearing helmets and gas masks. In other sectors, two Y women had already been killed, and five had been wounded or gassed, twenty-one had died in the service from exposure or sickness, and he did not want female casualties in his reports. He issued raincoats, too, to the women since their own were so worn that they no longer kept out the floods that poured from the reopened heavens. The soldiers forgave the rain much since it helped to clear away the gas, but it was tiresome and perilous for weary women.

For a time Joan took a childish pride in her helmet, her gas mask and her regulation slicker. It was a genuine hardship that she could not find a sizeable mirror in all Gournay, but she felt like a hero bursting with frustrated heroism. She hoped that she looked more like a soldier than either Sadie or Katie did.

She could not realize that feeding the men was as important as leading them. To have been to France and never have seen a battle

was intolerable, though that was the fate of two-thirds of the regular army officers out of the one-third who got overseas at all. But women were no longer to be put off with a little less than the least lucky man.

One afternoon Joan served food to a wounded soldier who had limped in from the front line and was waiting for transportation to the rear. His legs were good though his feet were sore. But one arm was in a sling. Judging from the red on the muddy bandage it was a legitimate "blighty." His greed was so insatiable that it shamed even the dusky driver of an ammunition truck who was waiting for the dark and stoking himself well enough. He went to the infantryman, lifted his helmet and bowed low:

"Boy, oh boy! my shappoo is off to you. I thought I had seen two-handed eaters what could eat, but you got only one lunch-hook and you're the eatin'est man anybody ever did see. I sure admire to watch you."

"Yeah? Well keep watchin'. You ain't seen nothin' yet." This was said through a mouth already full, with a knifeload waiting at the entrance. The truck driver groaned:

"Say, what's the matter of you, buddy? Is this the first time you ever did eat? or is it the last time you're ever a goin' to?"

"Both."

"Come again."

"I'm just out of the ditches, and if I ever had food it was before my memory begun. The last meal was five days ago and that was some dirty cabbage in a garden the Heinies had growed. They couldn't carry it off so they gassed it. A dozen of our boys was doubled up with the gripes before we learned to tear off the outside leaves and t'row 'em away."

He lowered his voice:

"Our outfit is in a bad way. The major was killed the first day; the three cap'ns got killed or gassed, and most of the lieutenants went over like ninepins. Now our battalion is commanded by a damn shavetail. He cries and cusses but he can't get his men out of the trenches. They're only in the line of support but they simpully won't climb out and move up. And the front line can't buck the Jerries without 'em. Both flanks is open and the Jerries is infiltrated between us and the outfits on both sides and enfiladin' our trenches into one hell of a mess. The colonel is plumb crazy."

The truck driver shook his head: "Amurrican boys layin' back and huggin' the dugouts! It don't sound natural. If I was in command of 'em I'd have 'em out. I'd turn the machine guns on 'em."

"Yeah? Well, one of our officers tried that, but the M. G's all jammed somehow. The M. G. men are just as hungry as the rest. I tell you that outfit is goin' to break if they don't get some chow right quick. I give 'em one more night and then they'll just fade. If they could only see me right now, they'd all be here."

He ate a little more in the name of the absentees, and swung through the door licking his chops. The truck-driver grumbled:

"Amurrican boys layin' back! Well, well, I'll be——"

Joan had an idea: "You say you're going in tonight. Have you got room for three soldiers in your truck?"

"I might squeeze 'em in. I'm always givin' somebody a lift. But why don't these three soldiers you speak of hoof it like the rest?"

"They'll be so loaded with food they can't make much progress."

"Where they goin' to get the food?"

"Can you keep a secret?"

"A lady asks a gent'man can he keep a secret. Yes ma'am, I can."

"On your honor as a gent'man."

"On the same."

"Well, I'm one of the three soldiers, and two buddies of mine are the other two. And we'll

be very grateful for the lift you're going to give us."

"Cheese, lady! that's differ'nt. I brought one lady clear up to the trenches in one of the other sectors. She had forty pounds of cigarettes on her back and she went right into the front line in spite of all they could do. I got hell for it, too. I'm off ladies for life."

"You're going to take us up."

"Oh, no, I ain't."

"If you don't, I'll drive the truck myself. Are you going to take us up?"

"Aw, lady, have a heart."

"Nobody will know us. We'll have helmets, masks, slickers——"

"Aw, lady, have a——"

"We've got to keep those green doughboys from breaking, haven't we? You don't want to be to blame for such a disgrace, do you?"

"Aw, lady——"

"Nobody will ever know. You take us as far as you can. Then we'll drop off and do the rest."

"Aw—(she gave him her supreme look)—ll right!"

He slunk away as if he had been found guilty of treason, desertion, insubordination, and running out of gasoline.

CHAPTER XVII

After Joan had enlisted Katie and Sadie she told Mrs. Dixon, who made no protest except of regret that she was hardly up to making the excursion herself. She and all the women spent the afternoon filling the three biggest sacks the girls could hope to carry—then added a little more to each.

Gusts of windy rain slashed the eyes of the few who had to be abroad that night, and nobody noted that one of the ammunition trucks had in it three helmeted figures and three great packs of ammunition for human consumption.

The pitching and tossing of the truck was something beyond belief as it worried lightless along the series of bone-cracking pits that had been a highway. Now and then there would be a halt while far-off German cannon planted shells in the road to prevent just what this caravan was trying to accomplish. The girls learned now the almost unbearable discomfort of the gas mask with its nose clip and its

mouth-breathing. They had been warned that when the mask gave them the feeling that they had been gassed, they must not be deceived into snatching it off lest they be destroyed.

In the sky there was a storm that seemed almost childish. The thunder had a bowling-alley unimportance and the lightning mere flashlamps. But the lightning revealed what the girls would rather not have seen. The very trees moved them to grief with their shivered boughs, their trunks leaning together or fallen in heaps of slain. The Germans had been shelled out of here a week ago and even the hatred of war could not refuse a further pity to riddled gray overcoats flung here and there with corpses in them. Their bodies had been further tossed about by the distant guns of their own countrymen searching this forest on a chance that American reserves might be sheltered there.

For hours and hours they were jounced about. They came at last to empty trenches recently abandoned, collapsed dugouts and monstrous open sewers where wretches had endured miseries that nobody would ever have borne except for the ancient compelling motive; it was the fashion and everybody else was doing it.

At last their driver halted his truck for a moment in a black patch of road, and called back softly:

"Here's where I stop. You'll have to drop out. And God forgive me for bringin' you up and— And his blessings on you."

"The same to you and many of them," was the best Joan could do.

CHAPTER XVIII

The girls stooped and slipped their arms through the straps and rose again grunting with the effort of peasant wood-carriers. They had overestimated the strength that would remain to them after the hours of buffeting and nerve-strain, the masks were blinding as well as smothering, and they found themselves hardly able to guide their feet as they staggered.

And what they staggered into! The thing that just rolled under heel, was it the limb of a tree or a man? The unspeakable mess that just crumbled when it was trodden, was it an old log or——

They pushed on until they had to rest a while, then hoisted their packs again and rather fell continuously than marched. Before they neared their goal, the dawn was waking. The East was like the rising eyelid of a dying giant, and all it looked on was death.

Joan's heart was sickened by the occult cer-

A United Artists Picture.

She Goes to War.

BLUMP, SLUMP, SKID, SWISH—MUD—WAR—REVEILLE.

tainty that every next body would be Tom Pike's. Katie foresaw the long frame of Toots Malloy. Their intuitions were false but the torture was real.

Before they knew it they were suddenly in among deep-winding furrows filled with moving gargoyles, goggle eyes under bonnets of steel, infernal animals with the short black snouts of baby elephants thrust into black charcoal bags.

The uncanny light gave the soldiers the look of grotesque beings gradually created out of mud. These were the forlorn wretches of the battalion that would not fight. Now they thrust their heads out of the wet ravines where they had tried to sleep. Something told them that these three back-broken soldiers carried food.

A sergeant ran forward and made signals of query. The girls slipped their arms from their sacks and let them fall. A lieutenant appeared. He was evidently assured that the rain had cleared the air of "mustard," for his mask was off. The girls snatched theirs away and would have found it heaven to breathe through their nostrils except for what their nostrils brought them.

Seeing that the newcomers were women, the officer nearly fainted. He croaked:

"Go away, in God's name. How did you get here, anyway?"

"We brought you your breakfast."

The word had a foreign sound. The lieutenant pleaded, pointing to the distant beetling ridge that his men had refused to take. It loomed nearer than it was in the tricky twilight of starlit dawn.

"They can see you from up there," the lieutenant mumbled. "They'll begin on us again, gas shells, if no worse. Put on your masks and run for you life!"

"We've got to deliver this food first," said Joan, beginning to tug at the straps. Katie and Sadie tore at their own, and ripping away canvas disclosed rubber, and then——

By this time the men were swarming out of the trenches, or leaning over the parapets. They thought it was a mirage they saw, when cascades of sandwiches, cans of tomatoes, of beans, sardines, pies, doughnuts, chocolate bars, began to roll out on the ground as if the cornucopia of the goddess of plenty had turned from a picture to a truth.

It was the custom in the trenches to distribute the food at midnight, for good enough reasons, but these men forgot their terrors. Nothing could hold them. Ravenously they tore at the food.

They chopped the cans open with their bayonets and drank beans and tomatoes from them. They milled around the girls with the manners of swine, and the same sense of fair play.

Katie Dugan began to lay about her, snatching from the over greedy to give to the timid. Joan fought with tears in her eyes. Sadie Slevsky pleaded:

"Don't eat too much. You die?"

This brought a laugh. There was small danger of their over-eating with so many stomachs to fill from the meager supply that three women could tote. But it was something, it was much, it was everything. It showed them that food still existed and somebody cared whether they perished or not. Women cared!

The officer casting his eyes on the height kept imploring:

"Ladies, please, oh God!—go away!"

Joan stuffed a sandwich in his mouth and put another in his protesting hand. He had to eat his way through before he could do his duty.

The girls emptied their stores into helmets, cups, dirty palms.

The voluptuous thrill of food gliding down a gullet again, roused the spirit-broken lieutenant to a power he had not been able to manifest

before, with all his superiors dead or disabled and his inferiors contemptuous of him. Now he shouted in a new tone:

"Attention, men! Atten—shun!"

The jaws actually ceased grinding, the hands went to the sides, the heels drew together, the ears listened as he roared:

"Will you go forward with me now? Will you, boys?—men—whatever the hell you are—excuse me, ladies, but the G— Will you go, men?"

"Sure we will!" they laughed.

"Then clean up this chow and get to your places before—there she comes! I knew it."

From the hill flared a blast of cannon-fire. The men vanished. The officer seized Joan by the hand and dragged her into the slushy pit, and she dragged Katie and Sadie after.

They hugged the muddy forward wall, till the shells marched across splashing mire and tearing up stones, but missing their cover. The bombardment ceased. The men crawled out to pick up the abandoned food, in spite of the pleas of their officers, and his commands to keep on their masks, as the next shells would surely be mustard.

But the men had seen food gassed once, and now they knew but one safe place to store it—in their bellies. They kept their eyes on the

ridge to watch for missiles, but they munched on in frantic haste. Shells were a commonplace, doughnuts were a luxury.

All eyes were either fastened on the girls or on the still more beautiful things they had brought and nobody heeded the drum-roll of an airship overhead.

A German scout who had flown across the line to inspect the roads to the South was being chased home. Astounded to see below him a bunch of men outside their trenches, he could not resist the temptation to take a dip at them. He dived from nowhere with his machine gun spitting through the propeller.

Most of the soldiers fell flat as if all of them had been struck dead, but the unpracticed women stood and stared. Joan, holding out doughnuts in both hands, was protected from the swooping fiend by the body of a young man who would never be hungry any more.

The shard of steel that caught him in the back of the neck came out between his lips and struck the doughnut from Joan's grasp.

A startled laugh escaped her as the soldier slumped at her feet. She knelt to turn him over and found that her left hand was streaming with blood. She clapped her handkerchief to the wound in some impulse of preventing the poor soldiers from knowing that a girl was

hurt. Instinct told her that they would find this insupportable.

The lieutenant leaped up and ran to the boy, muttering:

"He's gone! Now, in the name of God, will you girls go home?"

Joan was numb with grief for the boy at her feet, but Katie glanced along the line where those that were unhurt were rising to their knees, gobbling food and cursing and shaking doughnut-filled fists at the vanishing plane. Katie took command:

"Come along, Joan! Get up, Sadie!" She tore Joan away from the dead youth in a stupor and hoisted her to her feet.

The lieutenant asked: "Shall I send an orderly with you?"

"We'll orderly ourselves," said Katie. The lieutenant had one more command: "Put on your masks and keep them on—and God love you to the end!"

Katie caught Joan and Sadie under the arms, and flew away with them, while the lieutenant was darting to the sheltered telephone to ask for a little artillery attention to the German position to cover his advance.

The German artillery chose to ignore the three fugitives, and the girls reached the edge of the woods alive but hardly more. As they

flung themselves down for breath, the earth was shaken by the convulsion of big guns hidden so well in the forest that the girls could not see them.

Joan had time now to realize that her hand as well as her heart was throbbing with pain, but with it was mingled a peculiar elation. Hysterically she held up her red badge of courage, and brandished it before Katie and Sadie, crying:

"Look! I've got a wound! I've got a wound! I've got a blighty! I'm a soldier!"

Katie caught at her arm and studied the red mess:

"Holy Mother! and it's your weddin' ring finger is gone!"

"I'd never have any use for it anyway," Joan babbled in a crazy bravado. It was Katie who wept while Joan laughed.

CHAPTER XIX

Sadie cast up her eyes in terror, then glanced back over the landscape.

"Give a look!" she cried.

Joan and Katie stared across the gray waste, fuming like a region of geysers, like the Valley of a Thousand Smokes. Not a human being was visible anywhere except in front of the trenches the girls had just visited.

From there a ragged line of men was issuing and running forward at widening intervals, crouching, stumbling, pushing on.

"Our men are going forward!" Joan whispered.

As the girls watched, they saw that some of the men who fell, did not get up, some lay still, some twitched and wriggled. But they looked so small off there that they were impersonal. Those who fell were only casualties, even to these tender hearts. War had hardened them into one ruthless demand: "The line must advance!"

It was the line that mattered, not the man;

the line on the ground, the line in the air, the line of observation, the *groupes de combat* who were merely G. C.'s, the parallel of resistance, the *points d'appui,* the second position, the reserves, the big guns, the service of supplies—all must go forward, forward, forward.

While the girls watched the little line of midgets vanished. They had flung themselves into the forward position.

There was a noise behind. The girls craned their necks and saw another platoon coming up the road. It was part of some division that had not been long off the boats, not long enough in the training camp, yet was responding to the need and frantic to get in and do at least a bit of killing before the war was over.

The officer with the advance yelled at the girls, thinking them skulkers. When he saw what they were he was completely befuddled.

Joan snapped at him: "When you thought we were men, you thought we were cowards. When you see we are women you think we are brave. It won't be so in the next war."

The officer grinned. "The papers from home tell us that this is the war to end War. There's not going to be any more war."

"Or any more rain, or snow, or anything," said Joan, recognizing his skepticism and sharing it.

He touched his helmet: "Be that as it may, would you ladies mind retiring and letting us open the shop?"

The girls saluted and moved to the rear, staring back at the deployment under cover of the crest. They were beginning to wear out now, and to feel the utter drain of all their resources.

Shells began to crash into the woods like diving locomotives. These gave them the strength of returning fear. They ran, rested, plodded, hid, and put dreary miles behind them. Joan grew sick with her wound and giddy, and she leaned heavily on Katie until they reached an ammunition dump whence a truck was just departing, empty.

They rode back in that to Gournay, where they were greeted as if they had won the war. There was a French *liaison* officer in the audience that heard Katie's story. There was also a surgeon who took Joan in charge, and abused her furiously for the treatment she had given her hand:

"You wouldn't put a dirty handkerchief on the sore foot of a dog. How dare you disgrace your training so? Now you've got to pay the price."

He put her in charge of a Red Cross nurse to prepare her for an operation that hurt him

more than a dozen major amputations from shattered men.

He took the finger off while Joan slept in ether and Katie wailed and wrung her hands. When Joan came back to consciousness it was she that consoled Katie:

"Think how many of the Y girls have been killed or wounded worse than I have. This missing finger is my missing medal. I'm prouder of it than of anything I have ever done, or shall ever do."

CHAPTER XX

The news that filtered back was now all good. The Germans sought only to escape across the Meuse with the minimum loss of men and material. The allies overwhelmed them in a tidal wave. The engineers were driven almost to death repairing the roads for the advance.

The line in front of Gournay kept well in the van and the women moved up as close to it as they were permitted to, and then a little closer. The story went everywhere that the line in front of Gournay would have retreated if three saintly women from heaven had not descended from the clouds with manna.

The story grew and grew to epic proportions until it threatened to rival the legend of the angels of Mons. Before it stopped the girls were described as having ridden up with three rolling kitchens blazing and saved a whole division instead of a platoon or two.

When the armistice set the world ablaze with rapture, the French headquarters, eager to absolve themselves of their obligations by ac-

knowledging them extravagantly, found time to scatter a largess of medals.

One day a parade of French official automobiles honored the village not far south of Sedan where the women once of Marot were now making ready to end their part in the war. The Y and all the Salvation Army lassies were drawn up in line for an address of praise. Joan and Sadie and Katie were ordered to march to the front and, while a band played, a very great but very short French general, attended by a staff, bestowed decorations on them and read the citations.

The haughty Joan Morgan, once avaricious of honors, and boastful of what she would do in France, now stood crushed with meekness and overwhelmed with a sense of unworthiness. Her head was bent so low that even the general's Napoleonic brevity sufficed to let his lips reach her two cheeks after he had pinned the medal on her tremulous breast. Sadie Slevsky was crying so and shaking so that she was almost invisible.

But Katie Dugan's fright took a wintry form. She stood congealed with terror, holding her head aloft at the top of her lofty frame. She was malarial with chills and fever while the citation was being read to her in a foreign language, but when it came to affixing the

medal to her massive bosom and the kisses to her skyscraper cheeks, the tiny general found himself unable to do anything but stare up at her.

He was about to ask one of his staff to fetch a stepladder, when Katie, with an audacity that was the final proof of her panic, put her big hands under his elbows and lifted him easily up into the air.

Before he quite realized his plight, he stabbed the medal pin into her blouse and gave her the two pecks. Whereupon, in a throe of terror and gratitude, she gave the general two loud kisses on the cheeks, and set him down.

He was a fearless man but it needed his last shred of courage to get on with his task while his staff fought desperately for their shattered composure.

When Toots Malloy found Katie at last he saluted the medal with a tune upon his new trombone, his old one having been silenced by the Germans—who were returning to musical criticism.

Now all suspense was gone, the war was over, leaving an autumnal sorrow in the air. The Y hut was abandoned, the women returned to Paris and the scramble for home began.

Tom Pike turned up at last at the Y headquarters, hunting for Joan. He could hardly

wait for the first ecstasy of reunion before he brought out two rings, one with a small diamond in its crown, the other a wedding ring.

"The first," he said, "is to hold you till I can find a chaplain and put the second on you."

He caught at her hand, but she snatched it away and hid it in the palm of her right. He was choked with shame:

"You mean you won't marry me?"

At that, instead of flaunting her orphaned hand she put it forth humbly. His eyes widened with horror as he saw how the war had mained it, but he forced it to his lips, and his kisses rained on it. And her tears pattered over his bent head, while he pressed the engagement ring on the next finger.

As they were marching hand in hand to the chaplain, he said:

"I ought to tell you that I haven't got a job and I don't know when I'll get one, so I can't support you in the luxury you're used to."

"The luxury I'm used to!" she laughed. "You saw it—a cotful of cooties in a village cellar. Can't you do that well by me?"

"I might. Anyway we're both alive and we're going home together."

"Home!—together!"

There were long delays, but Paris was a pleasant place for a honeymoon. And they had

to return on separate transports, for the sea was thronged with millions of men and women retreating to the land of their birth, none of them quite the same in soul or body. The Old World they left behind was a New World and the New World a Newer, since those who had stayed at home had been almost as much in the war as those that went overseas.

The munition factories were closed, the war industries forgotten or altered, the war gardens restored to flowers. But the women had proved their mettle in the universal conflict and they would not be denied their place in the everlasting war that is flattered with the name of peace. No more would they be denied their place as equals in the everlasting duel known as wedlock.

Whether the union of Joan and Tom would go to pieces as so many war marriages went was for the future to say with its unforeseeable tests and strains and its shifting environments. Joan was what she had always been, would always be, a snob and not ashamed of it. She demanded more than ever of the fewer and fewer men she respected, but ranked according to their efficiency and their courage.

Tom Pike had become a scientist; he had learned to command, and to be afraid of nothing, of nobody.

He was no longer afraid even of Joan. And that valor before women was the first requisite to her respect, and to her love. She was proud of him and he of her, and mutual pride is the best of dowries to begin a marriage on.

A Girl On A Barge

The filthy little cabin of the filthy big barge where she had been born was still her home. It still dawdled back and forth between Buffalo and New York and New York and Buffalo.

In all her sixteen years, Miss Erie Kadden had hardly ever left the scow. It had grown so old that it was in peril of going to pieces, but she was just growing young for a woman.

Few people of her age had traveled farther, or traveled less. Always on the go, she never got anywhere. She had threaded life, running along thin streams of it like a white blood-corpuscle in the blood stream. She knew hardly more of land-life than a fish.

The speed of the scow's travel was so slow at best that being tied to a pier made little difference. She had seen much, and she had seen nothing. She stared at green hills and birch forests gliding by on the Northern waters. She stared at the stern palisades of the Hudson and the towers of New York. And

they meant hardly more to her than a landscape means to a tired dog or a cow-eyed cow.

Heroic times for her were the ancient days her father and mother told lies about, when both were sober and the twilight drugged their tempers. The parents dated from the classic period when the Erie Canal was a canal, and the barges were towed by mules and the children rode them. Kadden had named the barge after the girl he was courting, Bridget Maria, and he still kept the name, though she had been his wife for years enough to rear the long family, which would have been longer but for losing one boy that was kicked into the canal by a mule, and Erie's elder sister who had caught the measles when left at a boarding-school—an experiment never repeated. It had cost twenty dollars a month.

In these degenerate days the barges were mere hulks pulled by tugboats, and the Erie Canal was lost in wide rivers and lakes and deep channels.

But the change meant nothing to the girl. Her home was tied to a grimy wharf or tied to a tug by a rope, and she herself was still almost umbilically tied to her parents.

She could not leave the *Bridget Maria* when it was in motion, and when it was laid up at a town she was usually afraid to. Besides, there

was always the work to do, helping her mother take care of the flock.

Skipper Kadden and his wife had named the children with unwitting grace after places important in the map of their eternal travel, the big beads in their rosary. The girl herself was named Erie; two younger sisters were named Oneida and Utica; her two brothers, Mohawk and Clyde. This last had a narrow escape from being labeled Schenectady. There was the babe in arms, a little girl named Saratoga—Sara for short.

Today as Erie paced the roof of the barge bound North, and hung out the clothes she had washed, she winced under the sleet of cinders blown back from the tug. When she realized that the smoke was destroying all the results of her hard scrubbing, her tough little heart swelled with rage.

She ran to the prow of the barge, shook her bony fist at the tug and shrieked: "Turn yer smoke the other way, or I'll——"

The tug had never answered these threats of hers until today, when a faint voice came back on the wind:

"*Bridget Maria,* ahoy! I'm sorry!"

She glared hard and made out a young man at the stern of the *Martin Burson* waving to

her. She had caught him staring at her before. She had been taught that it is not virtuous or prudent for young ladies to accept even the stares of strange men. Her father had instilled the idea of modesty in her head by knocking her down once or twice for waving to passing males who had waved at her, and her mother had smacked her over for asking impertinent questions.

So now, being carefully bred to ignorance and circumspection, she made a face at the distant ogler, spat at him, flirted her back at him, and mumbled with ladylike disdain:

"Agh, to hell witcha!"

Then she went back to her chores.

Suddenly the smoke stream was mysteriously whisked from her clotheslines, and blown aslant down-stream. A glance over-shoulder showed that the tug had shifted its course just enough to take the breeze to one side. Captain Burson was laughing from the deck-house at the young fellow who had been staring at Erie. The Captain's voice floated clear across the water:

"How's 'at, Fogarty?"

The young man—Fogarty was his name; nice name, Irish name—his voice came clearer across the water, like a bell struck on a boat:

"Fine, Cap'n. Much oblige'!" He turned

to wave to Erie and to call to her: "Zat better, Miss?"

She turned her back on him and repeated her watchword, "Agh, to hell witcha!" but her tone was less biting, and she did not spit. She kept stealing glances at him as she walked back and forth hanging out the wash in a row of tawdry pennants announcing that the skipper was aboard with all his family.

Their number and nature could be told by their integuments. Here was Father's big undershirt, also his long prosaic drawers. He was a cleanly man, and changed his underwear every week religiously whether he really needed to or not, even when there was no coal in the cargo; even when the cargo was bags of sugar—which are very clean.

Alongside Father's nightgown was Mother's —you could hardly tell them apart.

There was Erie's nightgown, like the eldest daughter of her mother's nightgown. There were the lesser and lesser nightgowns of her brothers and sisters, Mohawk and Clyde, Oneida and Utica. There were her father's socks and her mother's stockings, and her own and those of the children. And shirts and chemises and underclothes for everybody.

There were the baby's things, most numerous of all, for the baby was noisy and noisome

in the stuffy two-room cabin which was parlor, dining-room, kitchen, and dormitories.

Erie moved up and down with her mouth and her apron full of clothespins, clamping them on the wet things that slapped her in the face. And she thought what an awful bother it was to be so rich and have so many clothes to wash.

Young Fogarty stared at her where she flitted about the barge, outlined against the sky, with the sun making a fur of fire about her wind-blown body.

And he wished to heaven there was some way of knowing her and talking to her. He got mighty sick of the tugboat crew. He was a first deck-hand already with a pilot's license, and he did his trick at the wheel when the pilot slept. The pilot was the owner, Captain Martin Burson. He had named the tug after himself and he was no worse than the other captains. He had moments of being kind unexpectedly. You could ask a favor of him once in a while and not have it denied just to prove who was who. Hadn't he shifted the course a little to save the Kaddens' wash at Fogarty's prayer?

Erie would vanish now and then down into the cabin with an empty basket, and clamber up with it so full that she had to stagger.

Fogarty put out his hand to help her, but he

could not reach all that long way. And of course her old man wouldn't lend her a lift, the lazy lump sitting and smoking. And the brats of brothers had strength for no end of skylarking, but never a thought of their sister.

When sunset turned the Hudson to a river of cherry wine, the Kadden family disappeared. They were all eating down below there, no doubt. He felt so lonely that he almost forgot to bolt the swill the tug provided.

That night there was a moon, blinding white as an arc-light in the city. The Captain was still at the wheel, and Fogarty had nothing to do but mope and stare at the way the moon whipped the wake of the tug and rained its soft powder on the old barge wallowing along like a whale on a rope, and after that, other barges wallowing along.

He had been there a short forever when he saw a ghost come out of the barge cabin and move slowly along to the bow and sit there. He had a notion that she was staring at him.

Perhaps she was, but she was staring also at nothing, and at everything. She had found it more than usually stupid down in the hold with the dishes to wash, and the baby squalling, and the four children fighting and quarreling, and Paw ugly drunk, and Maw ugly sober. So she finished her tasks and came up for air.

Ordinarily she would have flopped down anywhere, the nearer the cabin the better. But tonight she went forward to the prow. Perhaps the nearness of another lonely youth drew her like a tow-line.

Fogarty was sure of this, and he had half a mind to dive overboard and come up by the barge and clamber to her side. He might have tried it, too, except for not being able to swim. Being a man who spent most of his life on the water, he had of course never learned to swim. But he was always going to.

He was that mad to call on the young lady he wondered if he could not go hand over hand along the rope. He laid hold of the big cable, but it was all prickly and he misdoubted he could make all that distance. Besides, the rope sagged so that it was in the water as much as out of it, and with his weight on it, it would lower him to drowning depth.

He would have called to her, but voices resounded so on the water he was sure he would wake her old man and have the other deckhands, the cook, the engineer and the fireman about his ears. And the girl would probably snub him at that.

So he lingered and suffered the madness of youth for youth.

That may have been what saddened her, but

she did not know it. She did not know much of anything.

She could not read. She knew a few words as she knew people's faces. The names of the great Hudson day liners, the names of some of the barges, and the names of towns in big letters on piers or in electric lights—she could recognize them as she could recognize certain patterns. But the solace of a book or a newspaper against the corrosive monotony of her life, she did not have.

Her father believed, with many of the most eminent benefactors of an earlier day, that it was not well to teach poor children, especially girls, to read and to write since it made them discontented, disobedient and, worst of all, ambitious.

Skipper Kadden had saved his daughter from all these dangers, not so much from any settled plan as from the lack of it. He never knew where he would be when nor for how long. To send the children to a school was impossible, without casting them adrift on the world. So Erie had grown up with no more restlessness than a turtle, and no more ambition to be a fine lady than a turtle has to be an eagle—if an outsider may venture to guess what goes on inside a turtle.

Erie had seen well-dressed women and chil-

dren on the steamers and on the streets of the towns they passed. But they were usually so far away that they were like pygmies of another breed. Now and then a gleaming yacht went by with swell lounging under canopies, but they were impossible, fantastic creatures. She envied them as little as she envied the clouds of crimson that swam the skies before nightfall, or the mystic fish that she sometimes saw darkling in the deep water when she lay flat on her stomach and peered into the river. Yet there was growing inside her skimpy clothes a new body that was straining the seams. New flames sent brief fevers through her. She was pitiful for lack of a namelessness, but she hardly knew her hunger.

Through this long gloaming she sat musing upon nothing that was yet something. Ahead of her was a tugboat as almost always there was, and it was growing dimmer and dimmer, and the fellow named Fogarty was blurring away with the shadow. But she seemed to feel eyes there.

And they were there, smoldering eyes that fed upon her with a stubborn eagerness.

When Fogarty was called to the wheel, Erie was still sitting on the prow of the barge, kicking her heels in a drumming rhythm that he

could not hear. The river was little frequented along this lonely stretch, and while he swung the wheel sleepily, this way and that, he kept twisting round to look back. Now and then he would start as he caught sight of the crooked wake and the barges out of line, and realize that he was steering awry. He would correct his course and gaze straight ahead until his eyes were pulled round, and he would be studying anew the little figure so vague at last in the gathering dusk that he could not be quite sure whether she had gone in or not.

He almost ran down a rowboat crossing the broad river. The howl of the oarsmen fetched him back to attention just in time. When the danger was over, and he could look round, the whole river was smoking with mist and the barge was hardly to be seen.

It was grand there on the water, but lonely. The engine chugged away like a big heart. It was hard work dragging those great bulks through the stout current, but tugs were gluttons for work. Tugs could shove or lug ocean liners into place. And Fogarty could make the tug obey the least twist of his wrist. But he could not talk to that girl. He would stare back at the barge, sound asleep and dark except for the signal-light. And he imagined the young lady where she slept. And he wished to heaven

she might be standing alongside him and letting him learn her how to steer a boat, and he staring at the moonlight on her instead of the black barge humming along off shore so near and so far.

The long night brooded over the river and he kept his watch till early morning released him from his task. The world blazed with a gaudy dawn but no one was astir on the *Bridget Maria,* and he turned into his bunk to sleep.

When he was up again, he was only a deckhand once more. He must help polish the bits of brass, wash down the decks and touch up the woodwork with a paint-brush. He kept glancing across the gap of water to the barge, and when the girl was visible the world seemed to be inhabited.

Evidently her home was one of those old-fashioned barges that had no comforts aboard. The crazy stovepipe sticking out of the cabin and smoking like an old broken pipe showed that, not to mention the rotten paintless planks and the gaping uncalked seams between them.

She came up by and by with a baby in her arms, and it stuck a knife in him to wonder if it could be hers. Such things happened.

She had the heart of a mother in her. She dandled the baby, sang to it, tossed it in air, poked her finger at it, showed it the world and

the river. She even pointed its hand at the tug and flopped the little mit. So Fogarty waved a response to the salute.

The girl turned away again, but very slowly now. She paced up and down, singing, likely, to the brat. Then the old woman waddled out and sat on a broken-backed chair and took the baby and put it to nurse. And that took a great strain off Fogarty's mind.

At last they turned out of the Hudson westward into the state Barge Canal, and now the sunset was in their faces as they came to a lock. Here the tug and the barges were all huddled together while they rode on the water-elevator to the next level.

Fogarty had a chance now to speak to the girl, but he wasted a lot of precious time plucking up the courage. Which was funny, since he had never been afraid of a start.

Fogarty knew people. He could dance. He had had girls, some wild ones, some wise ones, and some who were very much both.

But he felt strangely shy of this little scrawn. He walked back and forth along the lock walls half a dozen times without quite coming to the point even of passing the time of day.

At last he had a grand idea. He hustled to the tug and found a newspaper that he had kept to read over again, having read it only

twice to the last advertisement, and the sporting news three times.

Fogarty was a scholar. He could read. He always had his nose in an extra. The other deck-hands called him a book louse.

It was something of a sacrifice to give up the newspaper before he had really finished it. It was like passing the kid a bunch of orchids. But let her have it.

He went past her once or twice where she sat hunched up under a shawl, with her face screwed into a misery that probably indicated meditation. At length he stopped opposite her and murmured:

"It's colder, nights, up North here."

She looked at him as if he had frightened her almost to death with some terrible saying.

Her fright scared him a little too, but he braced himself for another try. He took the newspaper from his jacket pocket, and said:

"I see by the paper that the Wint'rop moorder trile is in the hands of the jury."

She looked up at him as if he had accused her of committing the crime and then looked down as if she were guilty of it.

He smiled a little. He liked to have his women afraid of him. With the condescension of a raja tossing a string of moonstones to a pet slave, he flipped the paper across to her

and said: "You'd like to read about it belike."

In a panic she stared at the wind-whipped paper, then at him. The paper began to blow along the deck. She ran after the priceless thing, and had a battle with its frantically flapping sheets. It was like trying to quiet an eight-winged angel.

At last she got it together and folded it up and proffered it to him. He waved it aside.

"Aw, I'm t'rough wit' it."

She was so horribly bewildered that she stammered her dreadful secret: "But I can't read."

He stared at her: "My Gawd! Can't read?"

She shook her head.

He thought of all the blessings of learning, the luxury of literature, the jokes, the short stories, the murders, the baseball games. He had it in his power to spill a bushel of diamonds at her feet. He leaped across the crevice, squatted, bunted her along the cracker box and sat himself down beside the most frightened Miss Muffet in the world.

"Here, lea' me learn you your letters, anyway. See this kind of a step-ladder with one rung? That's *Ah.*" He had come over from Ireland as a child and still kept a bit of his

Irish teaching. So he called *A* "ah." He pointed out the letter with a nobly grimly forefinger, and commanded, "Say it!"

"Ah!" she said.

"That's fine and don't be forgettin' it. Next cooms—here's wan—this funny feller with the straight back and the curlicues—that's Bay."

"Bay! Bay with the straight back and the curlicues! Bay!"

And so he picked out the letters and made her repeat their names and find others for herself. It was the most fascinating game she had ever played, and the close contact with her teacher and tormentor kept her throbbing with confusion.

They had reached what he described as "Haitch—you'll be knowin' it fer bein' like two posts with a cross-bar."

Suddenly she saw stars and felt her ear being lifted sky-high. She followed it to a tiptoe posture. Her mother had come up and caught her. Being yanked about was too familiar a thing to have distressed Erie greatly but she almost perished with the shame of hearing her mother abuse her first caller:

"Off the barge, you greasy roustabout, or I'll call her father to throw you off. And if he sees your dirty face around here again, he'll bust it off."

Fogarty protested, "Aw, I was on'y——"

"Don't give me any or your on'ies, or—" She turned to call her husband.

Fogarty threw at Erie a glance of wretched helplessness, and she answered it with a look of woe. Then he hopped across to the lock wall and shuffled away.

Erie went below, still clutching the newspaper. She hid it in her bunk as if it were filled with the "Lives of the Saints" instead of their opposites. Since it was too bulky to carry with her, she tore off the front page with the glorious headlines and stuffed it into the bosom of her dress. Whenever she had a chance she would take it out and hunt for the letters she knew.

The letters beyond H were maddening. She got to know them by their outlines, but their names were a torment of mystery. She tried to think up things to call their unknown symbols, but this was beyond her. She was like an early scholar trying to fathom hieroglyphics.

She took delight, however, in picking out the letters she knew on the boats and barges that passed or on the sign-boards of the big factories in the towns along her way.

Such study was a kind of prayer in which she communed with the young god who had de-

scended into her life bringing wisdom in his teachings, and had been reviled and driven away as young gods have always been.

And Fogarty thought of her with an equal gratitude, for she was the first girl he had ever encountered who looked up to him with awe and meekly accepted instruction from him. The other rags he met up with treated him like he was dirt and you couldn't tell 'em nothing. They were a bunch of wise-crackers who read too much of the wrong stuff that no lady hadn't ought to be allowed to read, or if she did she'd ought to lie out of it.

The incompleteness of Erie's alphabet tormented the teacher as much as the pupil, for of all things information and advice are pleasanter to give than to receive; and he was frantic to be quit of his undelivered lore.

Fogarty plotted so desperately to meet Erie again that he did nothing right. Pilotry through the Barge Canal was far more complex than drawing a straight line through the wide Hudson. The channel was tortuous. It ran across lakes and ponds, through rows of buoys that must be watched for. It meandered along meandering streams. There was no time to think of both a girl and the course.

Along about twelve o'clock Fogarty ran the tug around, and jarred Captain Burson out of

bed in the first sweet sleep of night, and a spirit in the feet of Burson wafted Fogarty out of the pilot's cabin. The barges came lurching forward on their own impetus, taking up their slack and banging together, knocking Kadden and the other barge-masters out of their bunks.

An eastbound tug was held up with its convoy, and the peaceful reaches of the stream were resonant with blasphemy.

With bitter eyes Fogarty noted that the Kadden barge was covered with a family of nightgowns dancing about like a week's wash in a high wind or a meeting of the fairies in Ireland. He knew which one of the wraiths was Erie, and his heart grew more and more bitter. Fogarty was tempted to jump in the canal and thank heaven for never learning to swim.

At last the tug was backed off and sent forward, the barges were yanked slithering out of the mud and the reeds, and the procession moved on, saluted with the mocking toots of the passing tug, whose master called out to Fogarty's master: "Who let you loose at night without a license?"

To a veteran like Burson this was a hard quip to endure.

He was too near apoplexy to think up an answer ribald enough, until the other tug was

out of sight and hearing. He made up for it when he called Fogarty to him.

Erie, shivering in her nightgown, could hear the bawling-out her angel was receiving and she cowered under it, but not because of the unladylike language of the Captain. She was used to all the worst words; it was the best words that she had never heard.

The thing that crushed her was the humiliation of her hero. Tears poured down her cheeks with sorrow for him, the while her little mouth repeated all the Captain's obscenities with a change of names. She substituted the Captain's for Fogarty's.

If she had known how to reach the tug, she would have gone there in her nightgown to scratch the Captain's eyes out and show them to him before she chucked them overboard.

The final shout she heard from him struck her like the back of her father's hand in the face:

"One last thing I'm tellin' you, Fogarty. This is the last voyage you make on my boat, so help me. When we reach Buffalo, you're done. And if you ever ask me for another job, I'll——"

What he promised was as impossible as it was indelicate, but Erie did not mind the impoliteness of the language. What murdered

her was the thought that she had lost the chance to know more of Mr. Fogarty and his alphabet.

The knowledge that nothing could make worse their lot made them both a little desperate. And the next night Fogarty, who had softened Captain Burson's heart a little by the perfect meekness of his subordination, figured it out that the Captain would not dare fire him before they reached Buffalo, and could do no more than fire him whatever he did.

So at the ambiguous hour when the sunset was black with night or the night was red with sunset, he lowered into the water unbeknownst to the Captain, the skiff the tug carried, and dropping into it, vanished into the mist-smoke blooming again upon the water.

He rose from the mist at the very feet of Erie, who was perched on a corner of the prow of the *Bridget Maria,* staring at the tug.

She nearly fell overboard as she saw what and who had tapped her on the foot. But when Fogarty, in whispers, bade her make the painter fast to a cleat at her side, she did, and he stood talking up to her and she down to him like an aquatic Romeo and Juliet.

When her mother called to her she answered with an "Anon, good nurse," in modern prose:

"Oh, all right, Maw!"

But she did not go. When Fogarty started

to tell her what had happened to him, her language was even less Shakespearian:

"I heard every word the old s. b. said, and——"

"Cripes, but you know your alphabet grand!" cried Fogarty, so proud of her that he nearly danced the boat out from under him.

He patted her ankles and clung to them till he pulled the boat back into place with his toes under the thwarts.

He told her his plan, so mad a scheme that only an angel could have thought of it. When the Captain went to sleep, he would get one of his friends in the crew to stand to the wheel and another one to pay out the rope till the skiff fell back to the barge with him.

Then she must drop down into the skiff and ride in it with him back to the tug. There she could spend hours going over her alphabet and many important matters with him.

Her fright at the other happenings was as nothing to her fear of this audacity. Yet he had only to say:

"It's our on'y chancet to get acquainted. Would you lose it, Miss Whoever-you-are?"

"My name's Erie Kadden, and I wouldn't lose it—the chance, I mean. The name I don't mind losin', when the right man comes along."

"He's here—at your feet just, Erie dearie."

So she said she would go. What did she risk but a beating-up by her father? And that might come from oversalting the soup.

Her mother called and she ran, and he rowed back. He fastened the painter to the tug and swung aboard just as the Captain shouted for him to take the wheel.

The other two deck-hands were enchanted with the double opportunity of fooling the old man and importing a romantic girl aboard, and so as soon as they heard the famous Burson snore squawking, Gus relieved Fogarty at the wheel and Hank, who had lengthened the painter of the skiff with enough rope, helped Fogarty down into the skiff, then let the rope slide through his hands till the slack showed that he had reached the barge.

By and by he felt two sharp jerks agreed upon, and he began to haul in. The water was so dense with mist that the skiff came alongside like a tarpon from the depths. He wrapped the painter round a cleat, and thrust his long arms down till his hands were filled with a wisp of girl. He hoisted her aboard with a sense of terror, and let Fogarty fend for himself.

He watched the two kids tiptoeing to the stairway up to the pilot's cabin, and when Gus came down they laughed till their cuds choked

them. They could not see what was going on in the pilot-house. They could not imagine the sacredness and terror of the young couple in each other's presence.

Fogarty was no saint, but Erie was so ignorant of everything, so eager and so young in life, that he treated her as gently as any packing-case marked, "Fragile. Handle with care. Use no hooks. This end up. Insured for $100."

As for her, the pilot-house was a shrine on a hill that moved. The pilot was a man of appalling knowledge and power.

Who could have believed that the first hour of their converse was spent in quizzing her on the alphabet? They came to a city with a huge electric sign, every letter gleaming. It proclaimed the "Zephyr Sewing Machines" and was full of new letters in the infra—H region. Other smaller signs almost completed the alphabet.

Between whiles, he would explain the art of the pilot. He would set her little fingers on the handles of the wheel and with his own tough palms over them would show her how to make the tug answer the least call of the rudder.

Standing there enveloping her little body with his own big hulk and her tiny hands like a chicken's claws in his big fist, it was not easy

to keep from dealing with her as he would have dealt with most of the girls he had danced with and fooled with in parked automobiles. But it would have been harder to betray her helplessness, and the intuition that she would probably not know enough to resist anything he did. It was the improbability of her fighting him that made her somehow sacred to him. Being Irish, he loved a fight with anybody that would grant him one; but where would be the fun in breaking this wren?

She was clever, too, at learning the wheel, and he let her manage it alone for a moment or two while he stood with hands poised above hers to check any false move that might roll the Captain out of his berth.

Finally Erie was so expert at the wheel that he stood away and leaned against the wall of the deck-house to watch her.

She passed another tug, too, without sinking it, and avoided a buoy that swung up right alongside out of the curdling haze.

Next he taught her how to ring the bell that gave the engineer his orders to slow up, speed up, stop, reverse. He let her sound the bell once or twice when the need arose.

He patted Erie's gaunt little shoulder-blades and said: "You've the makin's of a pilot's woman, old lady, and when I get a boat of me

own and you into it, I'll let you spell me. And I'll put some fat on them bones, too."

She answered meekly: "If heaven's any better'n this, I wouldn't wish for it."

It was Gus who dissipated the clouds of paradise by warning them that the Captain was beginning to toss about like waking, and Fogarty's watch was nearly over.

So Gus took the wheel, and Fogarty steered Erie down the steps and along the deck to where Hank sat on the side-rail waiting. Fogarty let himself down into the bouncing skiff, and Hank took Erie into his arms as if she were a kind of divine sack of white meal and lowered her into Fogarty's hands.

The mists were gone and the barge came toward them with a looming ruthlessness. Fogarty met it standing and steadied the skiff into position.

As he held the barge with one hand and turned to help her up, his left arm could not help drawing her up to his heart for a moment. When he looked down into her upswung face, he had to kiss her. He nearly smothered her before he could let her go, what with the grief that was stopping her heart in her and his arms crushing her little ribs.

"So long, Kid," he mumbled. "Watch out for yerself till—till next time."

She could think of nothing to say grand enough, but as she obeyed his orders and set one foot on his bent thigh and made ready to set the other on his shoulder, she kissed him on one eye in passing.

And as she rose in air, gripped the rail of the barge and scrambled and sprawled over, she kicked him in the nose and almost into the river.

But he took it as a caress and managed to fall into the boat. Kneeling, he looked up and caught a glimpse of her face like a tiny moon swinging out to gleam down at him before it was eclipsed in the black cloud of the barge.

Then he gave the rope two sharp jerks and was drawn back to his lonely jail.

When the Captain came up to the wheel yawning uproariously, he found Fogarty on duty and received a respectful salute and a "Good night, Sir."

Erie had lingered to watch the skiff till it reached the tug. Then she had picked her way to the cabin of the barge, had taken off her shoes and her clothes on the steps and made her way to the little shelf in the wall where she was stored of nights.

No one was the wiser for her absence except her crowded heart.

The next day she hardly took her eyes off the tug. But there was no chance to exchange more than a remote gesture until Buffalo was reached. And there she had no chance to bid him goodby even with a gesture. Something happened to keep her below while he hung about in vain, paid off and warned off.

They lingered at Buffalo for a week, but the baby was sick and so scarlet that the doctor quarantined the barge.

One day the doctor took her aside and gave her a letter, the first she had ever had. He explained: "A young fellow named Fogarty asked me to give you this. I've seen him hanging around a lot."

Erie clutched at the letter so fiercely that she fairly scratched it out of the doctor's hand. He smiled as she ran away with it.

In the shelter of a stack of packing-cases Erie studied the envelope. She knew her name and the name of the family barge, but once she had opened the envelope she found a cryptogram without a code. Fogarty had printed it for her sake in capitals. But she had not learned the occult formation of letters into words. She stared at the page with delight in its beauty but in a frenzy of despair as to the meaning of those pretty signs:

ERIE DERIE IF YOU CANT REDE
THIS GIT SUMBOADY ELS TO REDE
IT TO YOU IME SORY I CANT GIT
TO SEA YOU AGANE BUT I TRIDE
IN VANE I GOT A JOB ON A NOTHRE
BOAT THE LIZZIE LOBDELL CAP-
TAIN JOHN BOODY I START FOR
NEW YORK TODAY GOOD BUY
HOPPING TO SEA YOU SUNE
YOURS TRUELY WITH LOAVE
FRANCIS X FOGARTY

After almost spraining her little brain trying to wrest the meaning out of the letters by brute force, she lay in wait for the doctor to ask him to read it for her.

But she was afraid to share her Fogarty with a stranger. Besides, the doctor, when he came up, shook his head solemnly. The baby was worse. It died at last and its mother was so grief-broken that she could not go to the funeral.

Erie had her first hack-ride, but she did not relish it. Her father's grief was terrible to see when he was sober, and ghastly when he had drink taken. The barge had to be fumigated and lost its chance for a cargo. It lay idle for weeks, to the vast loss of savings.

Finally it was called upon to take a load of grain from a floating elevator, and at last its prow was hauled around to the East and it was fastened to a stake-boat till the convoy was ready.

Captain Cregan of the new tug, the Rowley Towing Co. No. 8, called upon Erie's father, but old Kadden was drunk to the world and sprawling on the floor like a huge dropped oyster. Mrs. Kadden was sick in her berth.

So Erie had to play captain of the barge and pretend that her father had twisted his ankle and could not leave his bed.

At last they got away and she retraced with unbearable stupidity and leisure the path of glory she had traveled with Fogarty. She was mad with impatience to overtake him, but Rowley No. 8 was an idiot of a tug and as slow as an ox.

The puzzle of the letter kept her from going insane with impatience. By sheer pounding at it she worked out a few words. "New York" she knew, of course. "*Lizzie Lobdell*" she recognized at once, for she had seen the tug often and could have described its every feature to a portrait-painter. "John" was impossible, but "Boody" became "Bay-oh-oh-dee-eye." And she prayed that Captain Bayohohdee-eye would be good to her Fogarty.

A United Artists Picture. *She Goes to War.*

PERCY VAN RUYPER, AN ARISTOCRAT WHO FOUND THE WAR DIFFICULT.

Perhaps it was well that another tug took the barge back to New York and that the *Bridget Maria* was at the far end of the string, for Erie could not have spared a moment with Fogarty.

Her mother lay moaning in the cabin. Her father drunk harder than usual. The other children behaved like wildcats. Erie had to mother them all and play the skipper, too.

One evening after she had washed the dishes, she stood on the chill deck beating herself with her own arms to keep from freezing. She recited her alphabet with lapses of memory. The later letters escaped her, and she longed for Fogarty to correct her.

She went over her pilot lesson and twirled an imaginary wheel, talking to herself, ringing an imaginary bell and cursing the engineer for misunderstanding it.

She remembered how Fogarty had stood back of her, his hands on hers, his chin knocking on the top of her head. Loneliness swept down on her like a wind.

The sun slipped out of the cloudy sky, but no stars came in. It was not their night. A thick haze shrouded the river. She could only dimly see the stars of a city they were passing. She was mortal lonely. She would never see Fogarty again. She could not even remem-

ber the letters at the end of the alphabet.

Suddenly on the black sky there flamed out a great letter. It was the forgotten last letter of all.

"Z."

She cried out its name. It was followed by another, one of the earlier ones.

"E."

She knew that and as the next ones fell into line, she fairly shouted their beautiful names, "Pay—Haitch—Why—Air!"

Then all at once the sky was illumined with the gorgeous word, "SEWING MACHINES."

It was as if Fogarty had lighted them up. They blinked out again, but she knew they would return upon the night. There they came:

"Z-E-P-H-Y-R Sewing Machines."

They vanished, but they were always rekindled. She watched them till a forested hill took them from her.

Finally she reached the Hudson, and it was good to be rushing South with the current speeding the barge till the tug was put to it to keep the tow-line taut.

There came, however, hurricanes that picked up whitecaps and set the old scow slewing and rolling and leaking. Erie had to call the children out to help her put the heavy hatches

in place and make fast the tarpaulins that plunged like stallions.

Just in time they made it as the lightning came down the river like a raid of bomb-dropping black airplanes. The children were frightened into shrieking hysteria, and Erie was even more afraid, but she had to bluff it through.

She drove the kids down into the cabin with their wailing mother and their spewing father, and paced the deck to keep the watch the law required. She lighted the signal-lanterns and secured them in place, then dressed herself in her father's wet-weather uniform.

His rubber boots were hip boots to her. His nor'easter helmet rested on her shoulders and his slicker flowed around her feet. And she had to carry it about her knees as if it were a train.

The tempest overtook the barge and the fugitive tug, and the lightning stabbed the river on all sides like the enormous needles of a gigantic Zephyr sewing machine.

Erie wept and crouched against the cabin and made up prayers to fill the void in her religious education. Her petitions differed little from the swear words her father used in his own storms, but they seemed to serve the purpose, for the barge was not touched.

Still, she could not be sure that the next swirl of fire from the clouds would not destroy her entirely, barge and all. And the thunder seemed to knock together the heads of the mountains.

The searchlight of the tug ahead kept whipping the world and the other boats struggling through the nights like lost pedestrians. Blown against the cabin so fast that she hardly could and hardly dared escape, she gasped as the searchlight shot along a string of barges bouncing North, and picked up last of all the plunging tug.

She thought she knew that boat whose searchlight swept her own tug and its tow. The crisscross shafts of light fenced in the murk, and finally the flare from her tug painted on the night the other deck-house where two men wrestled with the wheel.

Beneath them was the name of the tug:

LIZZIE LOBDELL

She threw up her hands and screamed with all her might, "Fogarty! Fogarty!"

As if the cry that the wind swirled back into her throat had carried across the tossing waters, the searchlight of the Lizzie Lobdell ran to her and blindingly proclaimed her to the world.

But neither of the men at the wheel turned his eyes from the rollers ahead, and she slipped to the deck sobbing, forlorn, forsaken, ignored, and added her tears to the downpour from the shattered sky.

She rose at last with her boots full of water and every stitch on her soaked. But she had only her own shivering to keep her warm.

Fogarty had reached New York and was bound North again, perhaps to Canada. There was no hope of seeing him when she reached the big town. She would never see him again. What was there to live for?

Only the lifelong training of a bargeman's daughter kept her to her duty. She proved herself a skipper, even while she whimpered and hugged her wagging head like the heart-broken child she was.

The storm died out, the dawn came forth as if the sky were an unimaginable field of rain-washed red clover. But there was no daybreak in Erie's night.

She watched the splendors of New York creep slowly up the river, the parks, the white palisades of buildings. On both sides of the river cities slid north as the barge followed its leash. Incredible towers stabbed the sky and

hid the lowly old steeples. The river became a Broadway of thickening traffic.

Tugs innumerable swam here, swam there like coots and terns, and ferryboats like vast brown geese wabbled and waited for the barges to pass, and quawked ridicule at them for their lack of grace. Erie did her best to take her father's place and howl back curse for curse, but her heart was not in her repartee.

Down around the tip of Manhattan Island and North again, up the East River under the bridges the barge dogged the parade, hanging back now against the rope.

Erie's father crept out on deck when the barge was nudged up to the elevator for unloading, but he was weak as a sick cat. Her mother could not even roll out of bed. The children ran into every danger, and Erie saved their lives a dozen times.

When the barge was emptied of its cargo, it was carried away to the colony at Greenpoint and tucked in among a score of scows of every sort, fine new ones, and two with electric-lighted cabins, and others even worse than the *Bridget Maria* and with more people aboard. There were three thousand people in the barge colony of New York, and they made up a separate people with tragedies all their own.

One thing had helped Erie through her dark

hours: the hope that the barge might be laid up in some place long enough for her to go to school and learn to read. But the way to the shore was over half a dozen barges and she was afraid of the streets, the fearsome people that crowded them, and the fatal cabs and drays that bombarded them.

To the barge next door a little girl was carried across the planks with a broken back. A truck had got her. Two barges away, the children had brought home from school nothing but cases of diptheria. A friend of her mother's, six scows removed, fell ill and was carted off to the hospital in an ambulance. She never came back.

The gentleman next door on the left was always reading, and Erie was just mustering up the courage to ask him to teach her when he went mad and tried to kill his wife, who ran and jumped into the water to save her life—and didn't. It took three policemen to take him away.

The Captain of one of the barges went ashore one night and was found with his skull cracked by thugs. Such things filled the gossip that flew from clothesline to clothesline.

So it seemed safer to stick close at home. And then the *Bridget Maria* was likely to move at any minute. Three or four times it was

hauled away on odd jobs to New Jersey and Staten Island.

Never had her father behaved so hopelessly. He had lost all pride in his career. Somehow he found the way to new supplies of liquor when he went ashore.

He sobered up enough one day to go in search of a job, and came back sober and alert, his old self. But he found his wife in such agony that a doctor had to be fetched. And when he came he demanded that she be hurried to the hospital.

It was a ticklish job getting the big and writhing hulk of a mother across the barges to the ambulance. There was some mysterious talk of a necessary operation. What it was Erie never learned except that it was "internal," an "abdominable operation." Whatever it was, she had to be left in the hospital for weeks, and when she was toted back she must keep to her bunk for months.

Erie hardly saw the sky except when she had to go outside to hang up the wash. It was too cold now to set the tub outside, and the worst of it was, it was too chilly above for the children to play or the skipper to smoke there.

One fine sleety day Erie was almost convinced that her home was overcrowded. At that, it had a two-room cabin where the poorer

scows had but the one. Each of the rooms was all of twelve-foot square. But in the galley there was the stove, and that was packed like a street car with the big pan where the beef was boiling and others for the veg'ables. The coffeepot was squeezed in alongside the pan where broth was cooking for her sick mother. Add to that the big boiler where the water was heating for the washtub, and the stove did well to keep on its rickety legs.

In front of it Erie had set the washtub on a wabbly horse, and the clothes-wringer clung to the edge of that. Cupboards for plates and dishes, pans and skillets, flour, crackers, sugar, salt and the like, filled one wall, and the long bunk for Father took up another. The door to the parlor, dining-room and general sleeping quarters was cut in the other. And there were only four walls.

Inside the adjoining chamber was the dining-room table with its furniture, a long bunk where Mother slept, spilling across the edge like dough oozing over a baking dish. Above her head was the combined couch of Oneida and Utica. They were so snug that when Oneida sneezed, Utica shot out into space.

Across from them was the short shelf where the lank Mohawk kept falling off whenever he fell asleep. Clyde had a mattress on the floor.

And Erie had a whole folding cot to herself. What with hooks where hats and caps, raincoats and sweaters and overcoats, and all the children's things were hung, swinging and falling into faces at every jar; and places for boots and shoes and a chest to hold underclothes and the Lord only knows what all, not to mention the washbasin, the toilet cranny, a few chairs and a bench, and the dozens of other things a family of seven accumulates, the cabin was full to overflowing when it was empty.

When everybody was at home during a meal, undressing for bed at night or dressing in the morning, or when there was a storm on, the cabin was surely snug enough. It was not lonesome at least, especially now that Maw was sick and Paw was so frequently peevish drunk and banging about, smacking heads together, and roaring:

"Begod, it's like livin' in a can of fishin' worrums."

On this particular afternoon he was away and Erie was working like mad to get the washing done before he squeezed in again. Her mother was keening with pain and weeping for the lost baby and her wasted life. And the children fell to quarreling over a game of craps on the floor, and Erie was pretty well distraught.

But she kept rasping the clothes on the washboard and scalding her hands and arms and trying to swear enough like a muledriver to keep from crying like a little girl. And, then some tug swung some barge against the side of the *Bridget Maria* like smashing it with a ten-ton hammer. And the washtub tipped over; and the boiler slid off the stove, and the coffee-pot turned a somersault, and the oven door flew open emitting the baking potatoes.

The floor was awash with boiling water and a flotsam and jetsam of clothes and dinner and yowling children. And Mother all but pitched over into the soup.

Erie did not even swear. No one had probably yet invented the words for her thoughts. To cry would be hopelessly inadequate. So she laughed as she darted in forty directions at once, pushing her mother back into place. smacking brothers and sisters out of the way, rescuing what salvage was possible, and then mopping up the ruins.

She was good and tired when she was done, and she went upon deck for a breath of icy air and room for collecting her wits.

And this was the time that Heaven chose to let Fogarty find Erie again.

She was sitting on the deck alone, lonely

beyond even the effort to hold his letter in her hand. Her father was away on the hunt for a job, the children below scrambling out of wet clothes into dry.

With dead eyes Erie bleared at the dismal chilly world. Her eyes were gray and her nose was red. Then through the haze, as once when he stood up out of the mists on the river, she made out a blur, a tall young man, skipping across the barges. He walked into the distant focus of her eyes and she thought him a dream, till she heard him cry out, "Erie dearie!"

Then he came loping like a billy goat, and that dressed up you'd think he owned a warship. And he jumped at her and swung her into the air and crushed her on his chest and made her see stars with a kiss that would have roused the dead.

She laughed and she cried and she danced, and she would not let him talk till she had taken the letter from her pocket and made him read her every word of it. It was so frayed from being pondered that he said:

"Murder in Irish, it's time I was writin' you a new one."

"Oh, write me no more till you learn me to read them."

Then the tears broke down like a rain-squall

on the Hudson, and Fogarty holding her and patting her and saying:

"Turn on the faucets and fill the pails! Don't mind me new coat. The Yid that sold it me guaranteed it would shed wather like a duck's back. But it ain't gonna rain no more, for I'm going to whisk you out of this as soon as you're old enough to marry, and that's only a matther of two little years or so."

To think of Heaven only two years away was so beautiful that she cried a bucketful more. She stared at him in such blissful woe that she could only whisper: "Oh, Gawd! Oh, Fogarty!"

And then her father came across the barges on one of his dignified drunks. He carried his cane like an alderman and it was a heavy cane that had cracked many was the skull.

When he saw Fogarty hugging his daughter, he let out a roar like all of Daniel's den of lions let loose.

Fogarty turned and greeted him as polite as an apostle, and Erie faltered a formal introduction. But nothing would appease the haughty liquor that made up the old man's cargo.

"Off the barge!" was still his motto, and he kept striking at the dodging Fogarty, who

could not decently attack the father of his Erie. Erie tried to shield him and got a crack across the forearm that nearly broke it.

Then she had to hold Fogarty from tearing the old man to pieces for that. Running and dodging, she implored him, for her sake, to go away till her father sobered up.

He hated to, but he had to, and he let himself be chased from the scene.

By the time her father had sobered up, Fogarty's tug was off on another commission, out on the raging Atlantic bringing in through a blizzard an ocean liner trimmed with icicles.

Dull times, a strike among the tug men, a coal strike and an early winter finished the hopes of Erie. New Year's Eve found her sitting out alone on the barge-deck with sharp-fanged winds whipping the blankets and the quilts she had brought out from her bed.

She wanted to hear the revelry in New York, the whistles blowing and the searchlights playing and the horns squawking.

Her father celebrated with a grand spree, and then took an oath that he would never drink again so long as he lived. The children loved that oath, for it had been known to keep him sober for as long as a month at a time.

He kept it long enough to help his wife out

of bed and about the cabin, and to superintend the taking on of a load of coal for some unknown destination.

This was always a nice thing for the barge. Everything turned black. They breathed black air, ate black food with black hands, and left black marks on all the black things they touched. They washed in black water and rubbed it in with black towels.

Erie grew vicious enough to blurt out, "I'm black inside and out, and I've nothing but black thoughts inside me black head."

The only good thing about it was that they could steal enough coal to keep the home fires burning for a long while.

When the stuff was all stowed, a tough and stubby tug came up and yanked the barge away from the old homestead and pulled it up and across the river through a shrapnel fire of sleet to the barge colony off East Ninety-sixth Street on the New York side. There were fifty barges here, each of them holding five hundred tons of coal and more or less of a family.

And there they stayed while Erie wondered how on earth or the waters thereof her Fogarty could ever trace her. The weather was so vile that she almost hoped he would not even try.

The month of January had come in like a polar bear and was trying to go out like a bull

walrus. Sleets and rains, snows and blows kept the barges jostling and jouncing and the cables groaning.

At last Captain Kadden reached the end of his patience and set out for shore on an important mission—"to see a certain party."

The children knew that the other party would be old John Barleycorn, and Mohawk shocked the other children by speaking what they were all thinking: "I hope the old booze-hound falls off the dock."

Erie was wishing that Fogarty might chance to come along while the coast was clear, though the sky was not.

Along about four o'clock in the afternoon the weather went drunk and crazy. The tide was on the ebb, and a northwest wind tore at it and drove it away in a panic. The barges grided and bucked at the cables, and there was an ominous feeling in the air that something had to happen.

The clouds were torn down in a fury of hail and rain that turned the deck into a great snare drum. The barges began to mill and gore one another in short rushes and clashes like bullocks about to stampede.

Suddenly the wind screamed and broke in a tidal wave of air. Cables snapped with the boom of cannon shots, and a clutter of thirty

barges split loose as an ice floe breaks free.

Out into the wide swirl and leap of the river they swept, banging and twisting and running seaward with an unknown speed.

Erie must be skipper now, and she put on her father's great boots and slicker and cap, and ran up the steps and forced open the cabin door. It took all her strength. Hail, rain and chunks of air smote her.

A yammar of fear came up from the cabin where the hailstones and the rain pelted the children. The door banged shut with a deafening noise. She looked down at the children clinging to their mother and she praying on her knees.

Erie could not bear to stay in the dark and die there. She hurled herself against the door and slipped through, holding her hands before her to keep the hail from beating her eyes out.

In snatched glimpses she noted that the river was pitching its waves high with an oceanic frenzy. The barges were churning round and round in the great eddies. More cables were snapping. Men were running to and fro on tilting decks. Dogs were yelping, children and women howling for help.

The wind was shunting the barges toward the rocky shore of Welfare Island with an in-

sane energy. The current in the river fought them away, and tried to pile them up on Mill Rock.

A fire boat put away from a dock, its siren whistles whooping the signal of distress. A police boat came hooting to the rescue. A ferryboat abandoned its passengers and sidled out with its walking-beam swaggering.

Three bulldog tugs slogged up-stream to join the fight. Erie prayed that one of them might be the *Lizzie Lobdell,* and then countermanded the prayer and begged God to keep Fogarty out of the peril, for the barges were skirling along the river in a way that would crush any boat they hit.

At length the fire boat and the police boat and the three brave tugs formed in line and came on like police reserves advancing on a crazy mob. They crept up on the barges and charged on them, crowded them together in bunches, and nosed them away from the rocks on Welfare Island, began to drive them slowly back toward the East Ninety-sixth Street pier where throngs had gathered to watch the drama in spite of the tempest.

It grew dark and the fire boat and the others turned on their searchlights.

The *Bridget Maria* was gliding reluctantly back to its place, and in one sweep of the lights

Erie caught sight of her father on the pier, bracing his feet against the stringpiece and wringing his hands in drunken yearning for the safety of his children.

She understood him in a flash of pity and longed to be restored to him, and to love him again as she had loved him before she had known any other love.

Then, just as the riot seemed quelled, there came the charge of a new hurricane blast. A black pack of night winds rushed the barges and scattered them with a crackling of the last cables and a ripping of timbers as they broke away from one another and their guards.

The fire boat all but foundered as the *Bridget Maria* smote it amidships, caromed off to the police boat, dealt it a staggering smash, and reeled away down the river alone, while the other barges went their separate ways, huge buzz saws weighing five hundred tons each.

Down the river the barge shot in the pitch-dark, and all that Erie could do was to run into the cabin and light the red lanterns, and run up again and hang them in place.

She went out to the prow and stood there waving a red lantern to warn the world that she was on the way to her doom. As the barge whirled she was as often astern as forward.

All the river boats were letting off blasts of alarm. Searchlights were weaving a net of fire over the river, and every shaft of light was a chaos of hail and rain.

Suddenly she saw that her barge was being chased by a tug. The long arm of its searchlight fastened on her and clung, blinding her till she hid her aching eyes in the crook of her elbow.

The barge that had always been a helpless thing—they called it "nonself-propelled"—had taken on engines of speed and the tug's engines were driven to their utmost.

On one wide swerve of the barge she was carried out of the tug's searchlight and the tug ran into another light. She read the name *Lizzie Lobdell.* Clear as day she could see Fogarty peering over the spokes of the wheel. He had a wolf-look on his face. His teeth were white in his snarl.

She stumbled over her long skirts to a broken cable and made ready to hurl it. The tug shoved alongside, and she swung the line over toward the deck-hands, who clutched it and fell on it and made it fast as Erie fell on her face from the effort she made.

Farther aft, the deck-hands flung another line aboard the barge and Erie gave it a place to hold. And now she could hear that Fogarty

was trying to yell something to her as he rang the "Reverse engines!"

The storm was too noisy and the rattle of the hail on her raincoat was deafening. So she scrambled aboard the *Lizzie Lobdell* and stamped up the steps to the pilot-house, and wrapped her arms around Fogarty's neck and kissed him aft the ear and howled lovingly:

"What is it you was saying, Fogarty?"

He roared at her: "Go back!"

"Why?"

"Get your people off."

"Why?"

"That barge is li'ble to sink anny minyoot—or bust loose again. Hurry!"

So Erie clattered down the steps and made her way back to the *Bridget Maria* and down into the cabin, and herded the family out into the gale, and got them all across to the tug.

She stuffed them all into the engine room and then went up to Fogarty.

The ebb tide and the mad wind and the eddies and the weight and momentum of the barge on the seaward current gave the tug a fearful enemy to overcome. Dead ahead was a stalled Sound steamer, unable to back for lack of sea room in the crowded river, afraid to push forward for uncertainty of the barge.

But Fogarty set his teeth and bunted the

barge slowly round and round in a great circle that grazed the bow of the liner and tore off the buffers from the side of the tug. Slowly, bitterly, the *Lizzie Lobdell,* like an ant lugging a dead beetle home, pulled round into the teeth of the gale and set out for far-off Ninety-sixth Street.

In the crisis of this new labor, while the deck-hands and the cook were trying to fix a hawser to the stern of the tug so that it could be free to tow the barge, the storm ripped off a flapping signboard from a pier and hurled it through the air, with a boomerang twist.

It cracked through the pilot-house window and caught Fogarty in the head. He went down in a heap. Erie dropped to her knees with a cry and caught his bleeding head to her breast.

Her upward glance of agony saw the wheel rolling this way and that. She felt the boat rocking and gyrating.

She leaped to her feet, clutched at the handles of the flying wheel, barked her knuckles, but gripped, held, braced her shoulder against the devil's power beneath, and wrestled till she won. The wheel obeyed her, and she was compelling her memory to restore the lessons Fogarty gave her.

The deck-hands ran up to see what had hap-

pened. They found her with her eyes fixed on the night ahead, the hail pounding her face in handfuls of gravel. They did not know how to steer and she did. She ordered them to take care of her Fogarty, and asked where the hell was the Captain of this tug.

One of the deck-hands explained that the Captain had gone ashore and Fogarty had taken the tug out on his own responsibility when he first saw the barges loose. He would undoubtedly lose his job for doing it.

She nodded. She understood. She even laughed a little.

When the blood was washed out of Fogarty's eyes and the fog out of his brain, he took the wheel from her. But he was so weak that she had to help him.

At last they pulled up to Ninety-sixth Street and found the other barges already driven back into the corral. With the aid of the police boat and the fire boat, the *Bridget Maria* was persuaded to accept a berth and a set of new lines. It was her last escapade.

Skipper Kadden was sober if not by any means dry when he rejoined his reunited family in the cabin. The place was in a state and thicker than a can of fishing worms, but rather snug at that when you listened to the storm outside.

There was quite a piece in the papers the next day, with headlines on the front page. Erie went almost mad to know what they said. But she would not let her father read them to her as he might have done, having gone to school in his early days before he committed himself and his posterity to the slow but ruthless restlessness of the barge life.

When Fogarty called, he gave Erie a grand reading lesson in the headlines, "30 Drifting Barges Sweep East River." But the text was made up of small letters that she did not know —as yet, and when he read the story of the wild night and added the words, "The hero of the occasion was Miss Erie Kadden, who is to be the bride of Francis X. Fogarty, as soon as he gets another job, if ever," she looked him in the eye and snickered.

"You dirty liar, it says nothin' of the kind."

"Read it for yourself," he said, thrusting the paper at her. She stared till the tears blinded her poor ignorant eyes, and she sobbed:

"I can't read! I can't read!"

"And a fine thing for me that you can't," said Fogarty, "for if you could, you'd not be needin' me to learn you how. You'd be runnin' off with some reporther—or a lib'arian belike."

"Belike hell!" said Erie.

Fogarty glared at her hard: "Before you become Mrs. Fogarty, you've some things to unlearn, Miss, and piratical grammar is one of them."

"Ay, ay, Mr. Fogarty."

"And that's the first letther that cooms afther Haitch—*I*. Say it! and we'll go on from there."

The River Pageant

If ever a man experienced more surprise in a shorter time than Caleb Pickman did, his name has been lost, and the occasion forgotten.

Caleb took in hand what he supposed to be a little Roman candle and, to amuse the kiddies, set his lighted cigar against the fuse. It turned out to be a skyrocket.

Caleb has not taken a drink since—at least not of fire-water. He has stuck to water-water.

But the torch he dropped was picked up by his son, who became in course of time the most attractive and baffling young sot in Carthage, to his own dismay and the anguish of his sweetheart.

And that was odd since he had seen his father converted as quickly as Saul of Tarsus was changed into the Apostle Paul, and almost as dazzlingly.

Most of the citizens of the Midwestern town had witnessed the event, but it may bear rehashing for the sake of those who have never

lived in Carthage. So many people have never lived in Carthage.

Caleb's conversion took place in the grand old days when fireworks were fireworks. The present generation affects a safe and sane Fourth of July, and perhaps it is well that it should be safe and sane about something.

It no longer sees the huge set pieces that were erected on the high bluffs overlooking the river; the designs that outlined in fire the American eagle, the head of Washington or Roosevelt, the national flag, and other devices so cleverly contrived that you could almost tell them apart.

No longer do the rockets lift their radiant arches toward the stars; the mines no longer fill the night sky with bombs of beauty; geysers of white flame boil and spray no more.

In those days, though, from midnight on to midnight there was an incessant clatter of firecrackers and a sizzle of fizzlers. Giant crackers were joyously tossed under the wincing abdomens of horses. Small crackers found a brief lodging in the necks of bystanders and bypassers, some of whom still carry the memorials of patriotism.

At night in nearly every front yard fathers could be seen taking fireworks away from children to show them how they should be set off,

and often making remarks that should not have been set off.

The Fourth was a holiday to all but the physicians, the firemen and the undertakers.

Never did they do so much business in Carthage as on the occasion of Caleb Pickman's surprise. The credit for his reform was really due to the town's social leader, Mrs. Ulysses S. G. Budlong, though she never claimed it, since she would have also had to accept the blame for the bitter feud between the Pickmans and the Meltons, and the harrowing love affair of young Grant Pickman and pretty Elma Melton.

It was Mrs. Budlong who proposed that all the families of the First Episcopalian Church—Reverend L. B. Soden, Pastor—should bring their fireworks to the church terrace and pool them in one grand display instead of frittering them away in little front-porch affairs.

There seemed to be no danger in the idea, for the church was built of stone with a roof of slate—an advantage unfortunately not shared by all the spectators.

It was a pretty sight to see the people gather, the non-members forming a solid wall about the terrace, the members bringing up their contributions in armloads or in toy express wagons.

No children were prettier than little Elma Melton and little Grant Pickman, both shining

"scholars" in the Sunday-school. Grant was somewhat powder-burned from various premature explosions during the day, but he had kept Elma from harm, and now he insisted on carrying her burden for her.

He dropped his double load on the growing stack of skyrockets, Roman candles, Greek fires, sparklers, pinwheels and what-not.

And then the miniature Romeo and Juliet withdrew, holding hands, to the row of front seats reserved for the best of the good children. As yet the Pickmans and the Meltons had not turned into Montagues and Capulets, and the respective mothers of the tots gloated over their treasures and agreed that they would make a lovely couple when they grew up.

This delighted Mrs. Pickman, for Mrs. Melton's husband was the principal of the high school while Mrs. Pickman's husband was only the principal patron of the saloons.

But everybody felt sorry for him, since this was in the pre-prohibition days when intemperance was accepted as a confession of weakness, instead of a declaration of independence and an assertion of women's rights to all men's faults.

Professor Melton was a member of the committee of safety, of which the pastor was the chairman and Mrs. Budlong the third. The

committee's task was to superintend the festivities and see to the precautions.

It had withdrawn into the chapel for a final conference just before Caleb Pickman came along in a state which was known, in the quaint phrase of a sweeter day, as "pie-eyed." A coarser generation calls it "cock-eyed."

To the exquisite humiliation of his wife and the embarrassment of his model son, Caleb—who resembled peaches in that he was sweetest when he was stewed—was in a mood of such benevolence that he felt it his sacred duty to quench the impatience of the restless children and end the delay.

When he drifted across the lawn and rolled toward the pyramid of devastation, many smiled; but nobody had the heart to restrain him. When he bent and lifted the first contraption he found at hand, nobody had the courage to dash up and take it away.

The crowd froze and listened in an awestruck silence as he maundered amiably:

"Laze and zhelmun. It gives me grea'st of pleasures to start the roll aballin' with this pret' lil Roman scandle."

A low moan of warning escaped the huddled mass and several people went over backward in their interlocked chairs, as Caleb, with the

most graceful of gestures and a smile of such unction as only alcohol can attain, lifted a giant skyrocket with one hand and with the other lowered toward the fuse the half-masticated cigar he was smoking.

Incidentally, he tilted the rocket out of the vertical position recommended for rockets and unwittingly aimed it at the Committee of Safety, which was just issuing from the chapel.

Seeing what was about to happen, the committee started to return to the chapel. Mrs. Budlong in her haste dropped her purse. Principal Melton instinctively and gallantly bent to pick it up. The pastor assumed his familiar attitude of regarding with astonishment and viewing with alarm.

Only a moment they stood petrified, but that was enough. What a rocket has to do, it does promptly.

When Caleb touched the red coal of his cigar to the business end of the rocket, it did not respond with what he had learned to expect of a respectable Roman candle; namely a gentle shower of sparks and a few little plops.

Instead, it condensed into one tremendous second all of the characteristic traits of a volcano, an army mule, a cougar and a comet.

To say that Caleb was surprised would be to repeat his error and use a Roman candle word

for a skyrocket effect. He was so much more than surprised that he was all but consumed with amazement, heat and light.

He was instantly sobered, miraculously converted into a total abstainer for life, and relieved of most of his clothes and from one to three layers of skin.

Leaving him in a blizzard of coruscation, the rocket leaped forward. For the first time, Doctor Soden realized that his very bow legs were a special dispensation of Providence; for he saw all Hell going by between his arched members.

Professor Melton, up-ended to retrieve Mrs. Budlong's purse, protected her perfectly but received the entire impact of the rocket in his coat tails.

The children shrieked with delight to see him receive what he had so often given, a spanking. His was almost apocalyptic.

Their shrieks of joy were changed to screams of fear as the rocket caromed off the Professor into a flying buttress of the church, and off that, into a tree. By a series of terrifying ricochets it returned to its starting place in a fury of lightning and thunder, and spark-spitting.

Nobody knows what Caleb said but he said something as he ran. The rocket ended its brief circumlocution in the heart of the whole pile of

fireworks, which it turned into a sunburst of glory. Other and larger skyrockets lashed out in all directions. Roman candles by the score bombarded the neighborhood, setting trees, shrubs, houses and people on fire, while mines and fountains, serpents and geysers, and far-flung pinwheels turned the churchyard into a Gehenna.

The old negro janitor fell on his knees and shouted: "Jedgmunt Day! Jedgmunt Day am yere!"

His hair might have turned white in a single night if it had not been white already, but reliable witnesses maintain that in its desperate effort to stand on end the kinks were taken out of it for two weeks.

At that he was no more frightened than everybody else. The crowd was stampeded under the barage of blazing missiles, and few who were not scorched failed to be trampled, so that nearly everybody in town was branded in one place or another, and some in both.

The drug stores were reopened for the occasion and sold out their entire stocks of liniments, lotions, ointments, powders and bandages as fast as they could be passed across the counters. The fire department arrived in time to save most of the frame houses in the neighborhood, and by the time the blisters had

broken and new tissues had replaced the old, the people began to laugh about it.

But Professor Melton never laughed about it. For a week he took his meals from the mantlepiece and ran the high school standing.

And from the moment the rocket smote him, the word Pickman gave him a pain in the heart.

That very night his daughter ran against the new venom in her father's soul. Professor Pickman had run home as fast as he could limp it, and his wife had followed to administer first aid. It was not till she had bandaged her liege lord as best she could that she remembered their child and wondered if she had been destroyed.

As she wrung her hands in anxiety, little Elma came in, unscathed and so breathless with admiration for her hero that she forgot to express her sympathy for her father.

"Oh, Momma, oh Poppa, wha'd you s'pose, Grant Pickman saved my life, so he did. When them fireworks——"

"Those fireworks!" her father shouted, a professor to the last. "And don't you use that awful word Pickman in the house—never! not ever!"

"But Poppa, zise sayin', when them those fireworks came at me like they would burn me up, Grant Pick— Grant jumped in front of me, and took the first skyrocket in his chest, and

he caught fire and when I tried to pat out the sparks, he pushed my hands off, and more fireworks came and he helt me back of him, and he batted at the Roman candles like they was tennis balls, and when people was goin' to tromple all over me, he kicked 'em in the shins and when I tried to get in front of him, he pushed me down and set on me till all the shootin' was over, and he was so terrible burnt he like to died."

"Like to died!" wailed the professor. "Parse that, will you?"

"Why, Poppa, if it hadn't been for Grant Pickman——"

"If it hadn't been for Caleb Pickman, I'd not be ruined for life. Never mention the name. Never go near that boy again. Never speak of him or to him."

"But Poppa!"

"I have spoken once. Must I speak twice to my own daughter?"

"No, Poppa!"

"It's understood. You promise?"

"Yes, Poppa! And I'm awful sorry you got hit by the rocket."

"And never speak of that again. Do you promise?"

"Yes, Poppa!"

And she really kept one of the two promises.

She never mentioned that skyrocket again. She kept part of the other promise, too. She never mentioned Grant Pickman again.

But she did meet him. Since time began, forbidding a woman to speak to a man has always rendered him practically irresistible.

And so from girlhood and boyhood on, Grant and Elma conducted a precocious romance of clandestine fascination.

Grant was as good-hearted and brave a lad as ever lived, but in his growth to manhood he must pass through the valley of the shadow that his father had haunted for so many years.

Grant became the town's most earnest and assiduous drinker and nothing availed to reform him.

He could not even look forward to such a reformation as had sobered his father once for all, since fireworks were a thing of the past, and the Fourth was chiefly celebrated with automobile accidents.

The older people wondered if independence had not been carried far too far, and if there were any limit to the mad "pursuit of happiness."

Grant Pickman made ferocious efforts to reform, and his repentances were almost as violent as the sprees that caused them. But he

could never seem to go straight for any encouraging period.

He claimed that the reason he drank so hard was that Elma Melton's father would not allow him to call on her, and Elma Melton's father claimed that the reason he would not allow him to call on her was that he drank so hard.

Elma met him secretly, of course, but she wisely made the effort to reform him before she married him. Yet, just as she would seem to have established him in a normal state of sobriety, something would upset him or somebody would tempt him with a sniff of liquor, and away he went.

Their torment was no less harrowing for being commonplace, and their despair was encouraged by the knowledge that the world has been trying in vain to conquer alcohol since Noah himself fell off the water-ark.

A score of years had passed since Mrs. Budlong had vowed that she would never again attempt a Fourth of July celebration. She had forgotten her vow, when a need arose in her beloved church for the raising of a thousand dollars to pay off a debt on the pipe organ.

Nearly everything could be raised in Carthage more easily than important money. The church had tried every known device from costume-parties to amateur theatricals with re-

sults ranging from a maximum of thirty-seven dollars profit to a minimum of eighty-six cents deficit—counting the time, the toil, and the mental wear and tear of the ladies as nothing, net. To raise a thousand dollars seemed as impossible as to raise a million, but Mrs. Budlong, always great in a crisis, had another of her inspirations.

Carthage had never had a pageant. Carthage must have a pageant.

She broached the subject at a forlorn and witless meeting of the ladies of the church, with the pastor presiding. The women were so desperate that they had even invited the men to share their woe. Mrs. Budlong waited until everybody else had confessed defeat, and then she rose and said in her most gracious, drawing-room manner:

"It occurs to me, my dears, and dear Doctor Soden, that the thing to do would be to give a—a pageant."

"A padgent?" everybody echoed, glad to know that it was not pronounced "payjent." Mrs. Budlong was afraid that the echo might be sarcastic, so she corrected herself hastily.

"The payjent—or, as some say, padjent—is quite the fad in the East. It is both artistic and educational—interesting as well as instructive. It is like a lesson in history, the more

poetic side of history. They often give Indian padjents, payjents, showing—say, the Landing of the Pilgrims—or was it Hendrik Hudson who landed?—well, anyway, scenes like John Alden and Priscilla, or William Penn teaching the Indians to be Quakers, or George Washington at Bunker Hill, or Paul Revere riding, and all that sort of thing.

"We could give a lovely padjent here, and charge admission. People would come from miles around to see a really nice payjent. We could build a grand stand on the river bank and raise the thousand dollars easily."

Of course, hateful old Hattie Totten had to speak up: "But you have to have historical things for padj—payjents. We are so new—nothing older than a few tumble-down farmhouses and shacks."

"We're new?" squealed Mrs. Budlong, "Why, haven't we got the Mississippi River here? And isn't that as old as—as—I don't know what? And didn't those Frenchmen come down the river ages ago—Father Joliet and LaSalle and Peter Marquette, or something? And didn't we have Indians here? Indians are as old as anybody.

"We could give it on the Fourth of July. That won't be long now. And it would be so much better to do something historical and

educational and artistic than to waste money the way we used to shooting off a lot of foolish fireworks—oh, how do you do, Mr. Pickman! I didn't see you. Do come in! Your wife's right here in the front row."

To be greeted by the ghastly mention of fireworks just as he entered the room unnerved Caleb Pickman so that he slumped into the nearest seat for concealment. The parson crossed, uncrossed and recrossed his bow legs and Professor Melton, who had just slipped into a chair, got up again with a sudden recrudescence of painful memory, and glared at the blushing Caleb.

After a certain amount of hesitation Mrs. Budlong's plan was adopted by a large majority and she was appointed chairwoman of the committee on arrangements, with full power to select her own aides.

She called on Professor Melton to provide the necessary wisdom and research, for he knew everything, or, at least, he taught everything. He accepted with a groan, realizing that he would have an appaling amount of work to do for nothing.

As Mrs. Budlong cast her eyes over the assembly, looking for other assistants, she caught sight of Grant Pickman leaning against the door, devouring Elma Melton with his eyes.

He was sober so far as alcohol was concerned, but still intoxicated with Elma, and it occurred to Mrs. Budlong that she might make use of the pageant as a means of bringing together these two lovers. She loved lovers and match-making above all other things.

To mate Grant and Elma would be her masterpiece, and would end a suspense that had kept the town on tenterhooks.

Knowing that Professor Melton was the chief obstacle to the too-long-deferred marriage, she made so bold as to say that she thought Grant and Elma should play the principal parts in the pageant. Whereupon Professor Melton announced that if any such scheme were proposed, he would withdraw both his own services and those of his daughter.

Mrs. Budlong rebuked him sorrowfully, and persuaded him to let Elma take part provided she played in no scenes with Grant Pickman.

She little realized that Professor Melton was not the only obstacle to the union of Elma and Grant.

Everybody in town, it seemed, volunteered to take part in the pageant except Grant and Elma. The volunteers boasted of their modesty, and emphasized their groveling eagerness to serve in the humblest way, but made it

evident that anything less than a leading rôle would be an insult.

Ideas were poured in upon the hapless Mrs. Budlong, all of them silly according to her notions. She was set upon having something grandly allegorical. Since it was to be a river pageant, she must fill it with rivers. There was the Nile, which meant Cleopatra, of course. And a very nice figure, too, for a pageant, if cleaned up a bit.

She had heard of the Danube; but she could not remember just what. Oh, yes it was blue, and it waltzed or something.

There was the Amazon, home of the Amazons. She thought of a chorus of Amazons—but no, it was a church affair. The Orinoco, the Missouri, the Des Moines, the Thames—the—what a lot of rivers there were, weren't there? But they must all come and pay homage to the Mississippi.

She might have a number of plump ladies representing rivers. That would give jobs to any number of troublesome matrons. But were rivers ladies? The Mississippi was the Father, not the Mother, of Waters.

Eventually Mrs. Budlong decided that whether rivers were men or women, all of them except their Father should be represented by

mothers. The women who refused to be rivers could be squaws.

There would be need for no end of Indians, and the main difficulty would be to keep out of the pageant enough people to provide spectators. If everybody in town was to play in the cast, who would play in the audience? Where would the money come from?

One thing she was determined upon: Elma Melton should play Elaine. Of course, Elaine was not strictly a Mississippian, and it was doubtful if the river had even been mentioned in the geography she studied. But there was a framed picture of her on Mrs. Budlong's wall, a print of the familiar illustration in which the girl lies outstretched on her bier in her barge while the old mute steers her on her last voyage. Underneath were the lines:

> And the dead,
> Oar'd by the dumb, went upward with the flood.

Since the Mississippi flowed south, Mrs. Budlong hoped that Lord Tennyson would not mind if her Elaine went downward with the current. In any case, he would not be there to object, and she unanimously resolved that Elaine should go in and that Elma must play her.

Elaine was supposed to have a cloth of gold drapery on her catafalque. And where in Carthage was cloth of gold to be had? Nowhere. But Mrs. Sigourney Piatt had some red velvet portières with gold fringe that would be the next best thing. She would not want to lend them, of course, and, if she did, she would probably demand that her homely daughter Hannah should ride upon them.

But Mrs. Budlong had a way. She secured the portières, evaded Hannah, and persuaded a carpenter to build the funeral barge at less than cost as his contribution to the pageant.

Volumes could be, but will never be, written about the diplomacy, the invention, the toil, the complications, the bickerings, the peacemakings and makeshifts involved in that pageant.

Having persuaded Elma to play Elaine and get her costume ready, Mrs. Budlong cast about for a rôle for Grant Pickman, and finally hit upon the character of Black Hawk, the great Indian chieftain who had visited these very shores.

Elma and Grant had many happy hours together since Elma's father was far too busy to snoop, and her mother was absorbed in making the most of her first opportunity to wear a beautiful costume. She was to represent the

river Niagara, with a frothy green dress of chiffon and a combination of bustle and train to indicate a waterfall.

Owing to a hopeless entanglement in the first of the series of dress rehearsals, Grant and Elma were enabled to enjoy an uninterrupted conversation of several hours.

She was so tremendously exquisite in the simple shroud of the lily maid of Astolat, and he was so invincibly magnificent as Black Hawk with his torso bronzed to the waist, that they fell into each other's arms, profoundly convinced that nowhere else was life either happy or endurable.

The fantastic notion occurred to Grant that what they ought to do was to elope the next afternoon, ride up to Montrose, get married, return the following day, and announce the delightful fact to the fascinated city. Their parents would forgive them, when it was too late to do anything else.

As he threw back his gleaming arms in eloquent appeal, his nobility so overwhelmed Elma that nothing seemed worth while but fleeing into his bosom. So she did and he wrapped his blanket about her.

Grant spent the next day in borrowing not only an automobile but a lot of money from a lot of people. It was impossible to borrow a

lot of money from less than a lot of people.

His friends were not such as lent without security and without curiosity, so he had to explain what was up. He pledged them all to secrecy, but, in their commendable desire to wish him happiness, some of them tempted him to break his latest pledge to total abstention. It was his three-hundred-and-ninety-seventh pledge.

Grant's alcoholic cravings resembled his father's skyrocket in that it needed only a touch at the fuse to go all the way. You would as reasonably expect a skyrocket to start out, hesitate, hem and haw, go half-way, and decide that it would be wiser to go back to its nest, as you would expect Grant Pickman to refuse a second or a tenth drink after taking the first.

There was simply no stopping him till he burned himself out. His friends kept him from tearing up the town, but by sunset he was in such a stupor that he could remember nothing except his great mission.

Elma, who had not expected to hear from him, went on with her preparations, packed her suitcase as soon as her father and mother left for a meeting, and stole out to the appointed rendezvous. She saw Grant's automobile in the shadow and ran toward it. Supposing from his posture that he had fallen

asleep waiting for her, she put her suitcase in the back of the car softly, opened the door with stealth, snuggled up close to him, and suddenly flung her arms about him with a whispered:

"Boo!"

He did not wake with the expected start, the laugh of delight, and the amorous embrace. He was so inert that she thought him dead, and almost died of fright.

It was inconceivable that her bridegroom should meet her at the trysting place in any mood but one of romance, or death, and she shook him in mortal terror, pleading with him to live, and shuddering at the way his head swung lifeless on his shoulders.

She forced it round till she could get his lips against her own, and only then realized that his kiss was the kiss of crapulous swinishness. She let his head roll away.

She fell back from him and pleaded: "Grant, oh, my love! No! No!"

Still he did not answer, not even when she sobbed her heart out over him. At last she stole back home, unpacked her suitcase of her little trousseau, and her heart of all its hopes.

The next morning Grant woke up, nauseated with remorse. When he met Elma she refused to speak to him. When he telephoned she was

A United Artists Picture. *She Goes to War.*

MUTUAL PRIDE IS THE BEST OF DOWRIES TO BEGIN A MARRIAGE ON.

not at home. She returned his pleading letters unopened. So he went back to liquor as his one reliable friend.

The great day of the pageant dawned suspiciously fair. Excursion trains were jammed to suffocation. Steamboats fitted for passengers were almost tipped over by the overplus of weight on the side toward the spectacle.

Father Mississippi (Mr. Budlong) received the tribute of the various rivers with only the expectable number of mishaps. His whiskers blew away and Mrs. Melton lost her Niagara Falls effect. The Danube (Mrs. Hattie Totten) stepped on it.

The visit of the Nile to the Mississippi would have been a little more satisfactory if a nasty wind had not come up and begun to bash Cleopatra over the head with the flapping canopy. She was glad that she had insisted upon wearing a costume more suited to the northern Mississippi than the tropics. It always pays to be decent, even at the cost of an anachronism.

The Egyptian oarsmen—modestly clad in winter underwear dyed to suggest, without inflicting, nudity—had some trouble with their oars and caught several crabs. But they managed to make the landing, and Cleopatra (May

Belle McPhetridge really) came ashore with her headdress over one ear and the promise of one black eye by eventide.

The spectators watched uneasily the shifting of the scenery overhead. It was already twilight in mid-afternoon, and the dark had the grim luster that precedes a storm.

Grant Pickman was roaming boozily about in complete make-up. He was as sodden with liquor as ever Indian was, and nobody dared reproach him.

He was altogether an unpleasant person in his hiccups, and Elma felt that her father was justified in keeping him out of her life and out of the pageant, though it made her all the more miserable to admit all these facts.

Grant was determined to play Black Hawk in spite of orders to the contrary, but he was decoyed away from the starting-point till the canoe got away. He watched its career from the foot of the grand stand in moody austerity.

Seeing how choppy the water had grown, Mrs. Piatt had begun to regret the loan of the red velvet portières. She even demanded their return. "Those are my best porteers," she insisted, "and if they get wet they're ruint, and I'll never get another pair."

"Don't worry, my dear!" said Mrs. Budlong. "I'll be responsible for them."

She regretted this instantly, but consoled herself by the thought that if worse came to worst she could charge them off to general expenses.

Worse came to worst at once. Jim Bukey, who had been chosen to play the dumb oarsman, had the forethought to try out Elaine's funeral barge before Elaine lay down on the bier. Whether the banging it had had against sharp rocks under water where it was moored or some defect of building were to blame, Jim had no sooner taken his place in the stern than the barge sank below the surface with a speed that would have done honor to a submersible.

Jim Bukey forgot that he was supposed to be dumb, and forgot it so violently that Mrs. Budlong covered her ears.

Now that the barge had vanished it looked as if Elaine would never pay her *post-mortem* visit to the faithless Lancelot. But Mrs. Budlong would not be denied.

Lancelot, King Arthur and Guinevere and all the Round Table boarders were waiting at the platform in the costliest of all the costumes, and the whole Episcopal choir had been rehearsing for weeks the song, "Sweet is true love tho' given in vain, in vain." It was unthinkable that all of those rehearsals should also be in vain, in vain.

Mrs. Budlong pointed to a flat-bottomed skiff

belonging to a rude fisherman, and insisted that it be made ready at once. Coffee sacking was piled in the bottom and across that the red velvet portières were folded.

Elma was afraid of the rising waves but more afraid of Mrs. Budlong's flashing eye. She suffered herself to be helped into the boat and managed to stretch out before she was pitched into the water.

Then the dumb oarsman took his place, with wet feet, and wet legs encased in tights which had been dyed black, but not permanently.

He could find no place for his feet except upon Elma's golden hair, so that was tucked about her head. When he was ready to push off, Elaine sat up in a sudden resurrection, wailing:

"My lily! My letter!"

There was a scurry for the canna that had wilted and been stepped on. The letter was blown away, but Mrs. Budlong, who had to furnish everything from brains to buttons, found a long business envelope of her husband's; so Elaine set out to carry that to Lancelot.

She went dead again and Jim Bukey shoved the skiff from the bank. The oaring was not easy, for the wind was coming from every which way, and the water was so riotous that Elaine

could hardly keep from rolling off the red velvet portières.

And so "the dead oar'd by the dumb" went downward with the flood, and the dumb kept cautioning the dead:

"Lay still! Lay still!"

The waves were coming across the river in longer, deeper lines and the flat-bottomed skiff tilted this way and that until Elaine through half-closed eyes could see now the reeling grand stand, now only the opposite shore of the river and a sky of writhing black clouds. The spectators could see now only the white bottom of the boat, now Elaine about to spill over the oar-locks into the ugly water.

There was as much scurry in the audience as in the sky, for hundreds were in a panic of fear, and trying to squirm through the crowd and get home before the storm broke.

There was a hush everywhere except for the hurried murmur of the frightened wind and the low imbecile laugh of the drunken Grant Pickman. The audience was so hushed with bewilderment that everybody, including Elaine, heard Mrs. Piatt's shrill cry of despair:

"Oh, my poor porteers! Ruint, that's all!"

"Well, ain't that enough?" somebody shouted.

Only Elaine heard the dumb steersman's howl of terror as he lifted one dripping foot.

"Good Lord, the boat's fillin'! She's goin' to sink under us!"

Whether it was courage or terror that kept her motionless, Elma could not know; but there was no need for Jim's frantic whispers:

"Don't move! I'll get you ashore somehow."

He paddled frantically with his one oar toward the steps where Sir Lancelot and King Arthur and his court waited, looking not at Elaine but at the sky, whence a few drops of rain fell—just enough to set the crowd to milling toward the various avenues of escape.

The drops were falling on Elaine's clenched eyelids, but she thought them spray, and wrung her folded hands together in a paroxysm of dread. She did not want to die yet. She was afraid to move. Something of artistic consecration kept her to the rôle she played; but her wits were in a frenzy within her marble flesh. It was most vividly horrible to her that she was already dead in the play.

Jim Bukey, alternately watching the landing-place and the water, thrust and beat and stabbed so ferociously with his unmanageable oar that when the skiff reached the little wharf, it struck a glancing blow, and he went backward into the shallow. His oar, falling from

his hand, was carried off by the swift current.

The skiff, shunted aside, spun down the stream with Elaine, her eyes still sealed, her hands clasped, her little feet pointed up. A gust of rainy wind smote the skiff and skirled it into an eddy that went corkscrewing toward midstream, wheeling the boat round and round. Elaine opened her eyes, twisted her head, saw that she was alone, and quietly fainted, deaf to the thunderbolt that seemed to smash the rafters of the sky. A flagstaff caught the lightning and crackled as it split.

The crowd broke and ran, in a devastation of terror. If anybody thought of Elaine, he supposed that she would be attended to by somebody whose business she was.

Her mother remembered her and ran to her father, screaming her name, and waking Professor Melton to the danger. He could not swim and the people he clutched at broke from him. He saw Grant Pickman gazing after Elma stupidly. He had followed her all the way down-stream with his befuddled eyes, his intelligence fighting desperately with the drugged machinery of thought.

When Elma floated away he pondered the matter gravely, convinced that something was wrong besides his wrong self, but unable to figure it out exactly.

Professor Melton seized him and howled at him, pointing to the little bobbing cockleshell in the curling, foaming, sickly green water.

"Elma is drowning! You're the only one that can save her! For the love of heaven, Grant!"

The sot answered drunkenly: "Huh? Wassat, P'fessor?"

In mad disgust Professor Melton struck him in the jaw with all his might, and almost rejoiced to see him go over into the water.

As he came up drenched and shocked awake, the world quaked with a flare of lightning. Grant was sobered now as miraculously as his father had been when the rocket turned to a thunderbolt in his hand.

"What's the matter? Where—what—Elma? Where's Elma?" he sputtered as he clambered out on the bank. He was white now, and half-naked in his loin-clout and moccasins.

"Yonder!" her father cried, pointing.

In a flame of sudden lightning, Grant saw her, and leaped off into the crashing whitecaps that ran icily up his frame. He strode forward, then hurled himself in and swam with great overhand strokes, his head buried, save when he lifted it now and then to make sure of Elma.

The rain had restored her from her swoon and she was sitting up in the all-but-sunken

skiff, in the midst of the swirling red velvet, beating at the waves with futile hands.

Grant saw her so, and swam with maniac frenzy. He looked again and she was breast deep, sustained a little by the velvet, billowing about her as if it were a pool of her blood.

The next time he looked, Grant saw only her hands above the eddies! Then nothing; then her hands again; her beautiful head; then nothing again.

When he made his last lunge and reached the spot, there was nothing there. He dived with eyes wide. The world beneath the water, as the lightning blazed and died, was eerie.

He clutched and groped, and clutched again. A fold of her long robe blessed his fingers, his hands crept along it till they found her body. He swung back to the tumultuous surface.

He leaned back in the rain-whipped stream and took Elaine's head on his shoulder, and floated till his heart grew steadier, and he had steadied her a little and made sure that she still lived. Then he struck out for shore—backwards, wrenching his head about now and then to keep his direction, then kicking, and hunching, and swinging a free arm in all awkwardness up and back and up and back.

By and by Elma was enough revived to understand that it would help if she would put her

hand on his shoulder and let him swim forward. Now with mighty breast strokes he swept through the waves, and so kept alive till a skiff came plowing toward them, Jim Bukey guiding it.

Elaine's father had managed to find a few people to listen to him, and a whole flotilla of boats was soon on the way.

There was much rivalry for the privilege of rescuing the rescuer, but Grant and Elaine were finally hauled into Jim Bukey's skiff. Both were half-frozen, so sick and so forlorn that pneumonia seemed to be the least that waited them ashore, if they ever got to shore.

Both of the gentlemen who were at the oars pulled out flasks and demanded that they be emptied. Grant's muscles promptly carried one bottle to his lips, but they took it away again.

Jim Bukey growled: "Drink, you fool, or you'll die!"

"I'd a little rather," said this unfamilar person in Grant Pickman's skin.

Bukey stared at him, urged, pleaded, and gave him up as hopeless. He caught the girl to him, put the flask against her white mouth and poured in a few drops.

When Grant protested at the sacrilege, Jim

Bukey snapped: "Just because you want to quit is no reason why Elaine should."

Elma strangled, protested, yielded, took more and more, then called for more. She even urged Grant to drink! She burbled:

"Ah, come on, Honey. It tastes like hot water bottles feel. Ooh, how cold I am."

She drank some more. Grant tried to check Bukey from profaning her soul with liquor, but Bukey was a bit tipsy himself, and he snarled:

"Do you want to kill her, after all the trouble you took savin' her?"

Grant was too weak to fight, but it was revolting to see the change that came over his saint as the mystic influences of alcohol transformed her to an imp trying to tempt him.

"Ah, c'mon, ol' sport. Tastes like hot wa'r bo'lles."

Grant saw himself as others had seen him, and repented with a repentance that seemed new and complete among all his repentances.

When the boat reached shore at last, Professor Melton and his wife received their daughter with cries of joy, then in dumb wonderment.

The bedraggled Elaine greeted them with bibulous mirth: "H'lo, fon' parents. Your lil Elma's full of lil hot botter wattles. I mean wot botter hottles. I do' know what I mean,

but welcome home! Hooray! Three sheers!"

They appealed from Elma drunk to Grant sober, in a topsyturvied world. Grant tossed his hands in a bewilderment and a terror equal to their own. Jim Bukey took the blame:

"That lil girl's awright. Wouldn' yu rather have her as is than frozen to death, wouldn' you? I ask you!"

They took her home, and nursed her through the headache and nausea and her first experience of a morning after. There seemed to be little danger that she would ever seek another.

When Grant Pickman called, they could hardly shut him out. Thereafter it was reported that when people offered him a drink, he would smile and shake his head, saying:

"It doesn't interest me somehow. Seems such a curious thing to do. I guess I've had my share."

A Daughter of Today

In perhaps a hundred thousand American homes an anxious father and mother sat watching a clock and wondering, "Where is my wandering girl tonight?"

That was certainly the theme of Mr. and Mrs. Macready's bitter musings.

In perhaps a hundred thousand bosky dells in the land the wandering girl had ceased wandering and was ensconced in a motor-car alongside a young man, experimenting solemnly with the most dangerous of explosives, love—one of those curious dynamites which under certain conditions may be pounded, thrown about or trusted to blaze quietly and cozily in a fireplace; yet at the detonation of a certain special fulminate may blow up and tear everything within reach to atoms—or worse, to electrons.

This was certainly the case with Miss Varue Macready of Perrytown and the young man Hilary Welch whom she chanced to be collaborating with this evening.

Mr. Welch had selected this bosky dell from

a proved knowledge of it as the most seclusive and boskiest in the neighborhood.

His very car, like an old horse, seemed to know the place, for it turned aside from the road and came to a stop at the densest shadow with a gentleness that justified Varue's question:

"Out of gas?"

"Oomp-oom!" was Hilary's Zulu-like negative.

"Ignition trouble?"

"I should say not! My ignition is perfect!"

Varue pretended to miss this play on fire. "Lost the way?"

"On the contrary, I hope I've found it."

Varue laughed with sophistication.

"Well, anyhow, it's a relief not to hear the usual alibis."

"We understand each other perfectly," Hilary chuckled, "and that's another relief."

He slid his arm along behind her back and with graceful prehensility drew her shoulders into the niche of his bosom. She made no outcry, did not shudder or babble "Please don't!" Yet when his lips arrived in front of hers, hers murmured with a blighting indifference: "Just as much obliged, old dear, but I'm not in a petting mood tonight."

It was Hilary that shivered and stammered

"Please don't!" finding the policy of non-resistance more dampening than either compliance or displacency.

When Varue shook her head with a yawn of quasi-boredom, he could have roared. Baffled, he offered her his Egyptians in a silver case. She shook her head with disgust. He gasped:

"You're not such a prude as all that?"

She smiled indulgently, took from her pocket a little canvas bag and booklet of rice papers, tilted tobacco into the folded paper, rolled it up with a scholarly left hand, secured it with a deft passage across the tip of her tongue and shared the match he held in the cup of his palm.

He found her so beautiful in the ruddy flare that he burned his eyes as well as his fingers.

After a puff or two of pleasantly contemptuous smoke he dragged from his hip pocket a form-fitting silver flask.

"This may warm you up a bit."

She shook her head again. "None for me—and none for you. I've had one or two experiences with tipsy drivers; and of all the ways of squandering a fair young life, that's the foolishest."

When he laughed and lifted the flask to his own lips for a nip she pushed it from him. When he turned his back on her she put her arms about him and twisted the flask from his

fingers. In the struggle a good libation was sprinkled on her frock. The rest of it she poured on the ground, for in spite of his wrestling clutches she held it far out and emptied it.

He was in a fury. He could have slapped her out of the car, but women had not yet reached the point of equality where a man could pay them the compliment of a challenging smash in the jaw, and the good old days of knighthood were gone in which a gentleman could knock a senseless lady more so.

Varue saw that Hilary was tempted to beat her and being a well-muscled product of basketball and gymnasium contests she was quite ready to surprise him with a few new tricks in the womanly art of self-defense. But he conquered himself, though he sat breathing as hard as if he had finished a gruelling bout. Seeing that he was in no more mood for amorous dalliance than she was, she said: "That seems to conclude this portion of the entertainment. How about a little home, sweet home?"

He nodded and set the gears in mesh with a sound of gnashing teeth and the bosky dell lost its clients.

In the meanwhile the elder Macreadys cowered in misery, pitifully imagining their daughter in the throes of surrender to the basest temptations of an irresistible man.

John Macready was suffering the exceeding anguish of a man who believes evil of the daughter he has raised with innocence as his dearest ideal. He clenched his fists and groaned: "The automobile is the curse of the world. It is the devil's own. It is destroying all decency."

Jane Macready clung to him and pleaded, more for his sake than her daughter's: "But, Poppa, you mustn't think the worst. When we were young, we had dark porches and hammocks. Don't you remember how we used to make love in the dark? Varue is a good girl."

"A good girl!" he howled. "And she sits out alone in the dark for hours with some beast miles and miles from home."

His black fancies suggested to him everything but the truth.

After a mile or two of sullen jogging Hilary set his foot on the accelerator and watched the speedometer swing past the thirty to the forty and on past the fifty-five.

Varue was not afraid and she reveled in an ecstasy of velocity such as only birds had hitherto enjoyed.

This did not suit the purposes of Hilary and he thought to throw a little scare into her by guiding the car on a scallopy path and pretend-

ing to be as drunk as she had forbidden him to be. He succeeded in throwing the horses of one farmer into the posture of unicorns rampant as he swirled round the wagon, but he merely offended Varue. She said:

"Come back to earth, dearie. You haven't the excuse of gin."

Whereupon he gave the car a little more gas and the speedometer rolled past sixty a moment; then ran back to zero. She had put out her toe and kicked off the power switch.

He kicked it on again and shielded it from her foot with his own. He guided the wheel with his left hand and thrust his right out about her shoulder, crushed her to him and kissed her full and fair on the mouth and held her lips against his till her fist came up in a jab under the chin that sent his head back and jarred his wheel-hand so that the car ran off the road and down an embankment.

Death was close at hand, but the earth was so soft that the wheels ground in and came to a slow stop. The car, however, was tilted so far to the side that Varue was tossed out on the grass and went rolling down the hill. And Hilary came tumbling after.

When he scrambled to his feet and tried to pick her up she resented this remnant of an-

cient condescension, knocked his hands aside and rising, struck out for home.

He limped after her apologizing humbly; but she warned him in a calm low voice:

"I don't mind the accident; but if you ever try to kiss me again like that—well, it will be one more job for the dentist—or the undertaker."

He hobbled alongside her all the long way home, pouring out prayers for forgiveness with an increasing reverence. When they reached her gate she laughed and said:

"Forget it, Hilary; and so will I."

But she resolved to forget him as well as his assault on her proud lips. She had weighed him in her set of balances and found him wanting—in just what, she could not tell. But he had not provided the thrill she was looking for; and he was no longer worth a further experiment.

She went into the house feeling that the world was a lonely and a stupid place peopled with men of little importance and women of none.

The clock meant nothing to her and she saw no more impropriety in setting her latch-key in the lock at an early morning hour than her elder brother felt.

But her father was of the older generation when time was of the essence of women's contract with respectability. His wife clung to him and pleaded:

"Don't be too harsh with her. She's young."

"If I didn't love her I wouldn't care," he sighed, "but I've got to break her to save her."

When Varue found herself confronted with his mask of horror and his inarticulate accusations, the irony of the situation nauseated her. She was too tired to fight or to explain. She was so tired that she stumbled a little as she tried to pass her father. He caught a whiff of the liquor she had sprinkled on her dress in wresting the flask from its owner, and he cried:

"My Lord, she's been drinking! She's drunk!"

He caught her by the shoulder with one hand and raised the other for a curse or a blow. Before either could fall, Varue pushed his hand away and started to explain. He shouted: "Don't try to lie out of it. I wouldn't believe anything you said."

This brought a jaded laugh from Varue: "That saves me a lot of talk."

As she made to pass him he clutched her and swung her round. She ripped his hands from her with a blazing ferocity.

"Keep your hands off me! I won't stand that from anybody!"

Trembling with ire before her defiance, her father sneered: "You didn't mind the hands of your young lounge-lizard."

Varue narrowed her eyes, hesitated a moment, then waived all defense: "Have it your own way. You know everything."

There was something in her insolence that shook his suspicion more than any baby-eyed protestation of innocence could have done. He dropped his hands in a paralysis of irresolution and let her go on up-stairs.

When he left for his store the next morning she was still asleep.

The afternoon papers carried headlines that put a stop for a time to the Perrytown motor-car petting parties. A fiend accomplished temporarily what none of the good people had been able to do. He scared the young couples off the roads.

The gossips, the moralists, mothers who were jealous for their daughters' sakes, mothers who were afraid of becoming her mother-in-law, and rival girls (who should have known better) called Varue Macready a bad one at worst or at best a flirt, a spooner, a petter, a necker.

Even the young men of the town labeled her

a teaser, a cheater, a capper for the gasoline dealers and a dealer in false hopes.

But she was the most earnest of young women, taking life with exceeding seriousness and determined that she would try as many men as she could decoy into her laboratory. When she found the one that stood the test and caused the supreme reaction in her heart she would accept him as her mate for life—or as long at least as he continued to live up to his promises.

Without realizing how great she was, without realizing perhaps just what she was after, she was devoting her perfect body and her perfect instincts to the highest development of her posterity. She was doing her bit for evolution with the blind sincerity of the birds, the fish, the quadrupeds and all the other manifestations of life in which the female chooses her mate after putting many males through their paces.

She frightened her parents and horrified her neighbors by performing her experiments in a solitude shared by only one young man at a time.

When her father and mother had insisted on sitting in the living-room with the slide doors open into the parlor, she led the young man of the evening outdoors, saying that it was cooler

on the porch, although she knew it would be much warmer on the porch.

When her father had put an electric light on the porch and kept it aglow, she suggested to her caller that it would be nice exercise to take a little stroll. It was grand exercise.

When the idiotic city fathers had yielded to the insanity of reformers who said that there was too much spooning in Lovers' Lane and cut down the double row of trees that made Badeau Street a lane for lovers, Varue led her callers to the park.

In every town there is a busybody of imbecilic busybodies who drive lovers to despair by trying to make spooning impossible. They are the true advocates of race suicide, for they make it more and more difficult for young people to learn how to love and to fall deeply enough in love to take up the appalling responsibilities of marriage.

But love will find the way. And just when it seemed as if the omnipresence of electric lights and the disappearance of shade trees and front porches were about to drive young love out of business in America, Cupid inspired somebody to invent the automobile and to make it so cheap that every young man could afford to make the first payment on one, and so easy

to run that every young girl could steer one.

As soon as Varue was old enough to secure an operator's license, she wheedled a car out of her father on the excuse that she could run him down to his office of mornings and call and get him of evenings; and also do the marketing. She did all these things—especially her own marketing. Her own markets did not open till after dark.

Now parents, gossips, scandal-mongers, old maids and all other enemies of love for one reason or another, hate dark and distance, both of which are the favorite and indeed the necessary conditions of love.

The Perrytown gossips went almost out of their wits and quite out of their vocabularies when they saw Varue's well-known runabout scooting toward the open country. They called her car the gadabout.

Mr. and Mrs. Macready were ghastly afraid of many things, but the thing they spoke of was the danger she ran. Assuming—for argument's sake—that she would resist any and all advances, supposing that some of the young men——

"Nonsense!" laughed Varue, "any girl can take care of herself anywhere with any young man—provided she wants to—really wants to —unless the man is a drunken beast or a

maniac. I'm as strong as any man I know. I can squirm and I've got a fist, and I know a trick or two that would make any sane man lose all interest in me right away."

This held the parents mute for a while though it did not quell their alarms in the least. The climax was reached in this excursion with Hilary Welch, ending in a return with a whisky aroma and a mood of open defiance.

And then the maniac appeared.

In Perrytown as in many other, perhaps in all other communities, there was a sudden panic of tragic terror caused by the visitation of a mysterious elusive fiend who wreaked a frightful, irrevocable crime upon trapped lovers.

The moralists never took the blame for it. They never take the blame for anything. They made a horrid scandal of the roadside petting parties, though nothing worse—and nothing better—could have occurred in the automobile than had occurred of old in the dim-lit parlors and the hammock-hung porches. Exactly the same things occured there, according to the nature of the couples.

But the moralists jumped to the most immoral conclusions, procured an ordinance forbidding such trysts, and set the constables to patrolling the streets and roads and arresting all spooners. Puritanism and cleverness have

rarely gone together, and the only result of the crusade had been that the young lovers of Perrytown moved farther out into the country or took a chance with the police. No one has ever yet devised a sure way of policing the police, and the Perrytown constables added new bribes to the old.

And this it was that paved the way for the devastation of the beast who won the name of the Badge Bandit.

His first exploit was kept out of the town papers, but it had a wildfire circulation among the gossips. Bruce Blake told the story before he realized what he was doing. He had taken pretty little Sally Corson out for a drive. They had stopped at the side of the road "to watch the view and discuss their approaching marriage." Suddenly an unknown man had thrust a pistol into Bruce's ear and told him that he and the girl were under arrest. The man flashed a badge to prove his authority.

He made Bruce get out into the road and turn over all his valuables. After he had robbed Sally in her turn, he leaped into the car and drove off with her. When Bruce tried to prevent this horror, the Badge Bandit shot him down and left him for dead. An hour later Sally was found by the side of the road, in the

condition that is known as "better dead." The next morning Bruce's car was discovered wrecked in a ditch.

Everybody had read of this fearful thing happening in other towns. It had never ended with one atrocity but had gone on for months, always with the complete bafflement of the police, who did nothing more than pick up clues that ended in the pigeonholes of the district attorney.

And now Perrytown people said: "It has come to Perrytown!"

Mr. and Mrs. Macready and the other parents had no difficulty in keeping their children at home for a while. Then they went out again. A week later Harry Pento had his skull beaten in and the Badge Bandit carried off his companion, Mrs. Nettie Prout. Harry could not say that they had been "discussing their approaching marriage."

Again the lonely roads were lonely. But love would not be denied.

The parents of Varue were frantic when she said she would rather die than stay cooped up in the house all evening every evening. There was no way of keeping her in if she decided to go out, for the good old Puritan days and laws have long since passed which made disobedi-

ence of parents a crime punishable with death.

Love seeking its mate finds peril everywhere and in the peril a further loveliness.

Varue welcomed the Badge Bandit in a way because he gave her a new test of her lovers. Her man of men must have courage above all things and she had had no chance to apply the ordeal of bravery.

Two or three of the foremost contenders for her heart automatically eliminated themselves by finding various reasons for not motoring out of nights with her. They were sane and worthy men and they had a quite proper objection to submitting themselves to the attentions of an assassin and a ravisher who struck from the dark. They had altruistic reasons, too, and while none of them would admit that he was afraid of any man on earth, they all stated that their regard for Varue forbade them to risk her precious integrity.

Varue scratched them from her list.

Just one young man admitted that he was afraid of the Badge Bandit—Malcolm Stone. He had been a soldier too—drafted, but later decorated. Malcolm told Varue, with more truth than novelty:

"I was scared only once in France. That was from the moment I landed till the moment I left. They said I was a hero and pinned

medals on me, but I must have been in a trance at the time, for I couldn't remember a thing and I darned near fainted when they told me about it afterward."

Varue put him down as a non-eligible, but he insisted on calling on her at a time when her list of callers was not overcrowded. The Badge Bandit had brought on a positive epidemic of night-work among the young men. Also an epidemic of breakdowns in automobiles that had hitherto "made their little old sixty an hour without a stutter."

One night Varue would have been left at home unprotected from her family if Malcolm had not drifted in. She was all for a moonlight spin, but Malcolm flatly declined to ride.

"I'll walk to a movie with you, but I've got all the medals I'm going to risk getting. The Badge Bandit decorates you with a cracked bean or a bullet hole and I'm just naturally fed up on cartridge music."

Rather than indulge in a game of sit-out with the family, Varue consented to stroll down to the Perrytown Palace and see a film unrolled.

It was a good, honest, reliable picture, omitting none of the standardized ingredients. At the proper moment the villain found the heroine alone in a room, locked the door, pocketed

the key, advanced into a great close-up with a magnificent leer and seized her in his dastardly embrace.

As usual, she did nothing to disturb his make-up. She beat him on his massive chest a few times and swung back at an inviting angle of twenty-five degrees.

The hero arrived on schedule, broke in the door and knocked the villain down, then waited for the villain to get up and knock him down. With equal Queensbury courtesy the villain waited till the hero got up and knocked him down. After the necessary amount of furniture was thrown and broken, the two rolled over a number of times. Eventually, just before the hero expired, he landed the knock-out smash and the villain ceased villaining till the next picture.

All this while the heroine comported herself according to the rigid etiquette of the silent drama. Though her lover was being massacred at her feet and her life and virtue were at stake, her hands clung to one another instead of breaking everything handy over the villain's head.

Of course she knew that the hero would win, but the audience was always led to hope that just this once he might not, though up to date

no professional hero had ever been whipped by any professional villain.

Malcolm was properly thrilled but Varue was indignant. She groaned on the way home:

"These movie heroines make me sick. I'm just nauseated with girls that stand by idle while their fool lovers get butchered for their worthless sakes. Why do they always wring their hands? I'd like to wring their necks!"

"What would you have done in that girl's place?"

"I'd have ground the villain's eyes out with my high heels, or stuck a pair of open scissors in him and closed 'em."

"Whew!" whewed Malcolm, not at all impressed by her pretty ferocity. "Oh no, you wouldn't!"

"Oh, yes, I would!"

"Oh, no, you wouldn't!"

"Oh, wouldn't I, though!"

"I can't believe it."

"Just wait and see. Take me out and give me a whack at the Badge Bandit."

"Heaven forbid!"

"What would you do if the Badge Bandit stuck a pistol in your ribs?"

"I'd stick up my hands."

"And what if he tried to run off with me?"

"Let's not talk of it."

"But I want to know. Would you jump him at once?"

"With a loaded gun in his hands?"

"Oom-hoom."

"I hope not."

"But if he started away with me?"

"Well, what could I do? I could get shot. But that wouldn't help you any. I can't run much since the war and I'm gun-shy."

He felt that her eyes seared him and branded him as a cowardly cur, but he loved her too well to pretend even in an imaginary case. He suffered direly when she turned from him in scorn and took her hand from his arm.

"Well, all right, you can let him take me. But he won't have much fun, I can tell you. He'd have to knock me unconscious and I shouldn't think that would interest even a maniac. He'd take me cold or not at all."

"For the Lord's sake, change the subject!" said the decorated warrior.

When Varue left him, she scratched him also off the almost exhausted list of candidates for her affections.

A week of evenings at home listening to the radio or the family prattle maddened Varue till she was all but ready to go out alone and invite the Badge Bandit to call.

A United Artists Picture. *She Goes to War.*

LOVE CONCEDES AGAIN AND JOAN TAKES TO "DUNKING."

Then a tennis tournament in the next town was announced and crowds motored over from Perrytown. Varue had offended so many of the gallants that she was not invited by any of them. She was driven to asking Malcolm Stone to be her guest.

He had been the champion of Perrytown before the war put a permanent crimp in his legs and disabled his right arm for any more exacting work than handling a table knife and a fountain pen.

The tournament lasted till dark and too late to reach Perrytown for dinner. So Malcolm suggested that they stop at a pretty road-house on the way.

It was fairly late when they finished and the moonlight had wooed them on the porch where their dinner was served. He drove the car back and grew very tender, and Varue felt so sorry for him that she let him talk of love without ridicule.

The moon seemed to beseech them not to waste her dulcet splendor and when the car reached the very spot where Hilary Welch had forfeited her interest, Malcolm gave the wheel a little turn that sent the car into the deeps of moon-dappled shadow.

Varue smiled benignly as he shut off the engine. When Malcolm put his arms about her

with entreaty and solemnity her heart was filled with an *attendrissement*—not so much for him as for all the lovers in the world, for love itself, and for the sweet sake of the moon and the clear harmony that trembled in the blue-imbued air.

When Malcolm with a priestly adoration pleaded for a kiss as for a boon of priceless value, she could not play the miser and she smiled almost maternally as she made him a gift of her lips. Since she could in nowise deplete the store of her kisses, she rewarded his gratitude with more.

When he clenched her in his arms she proved to him how strong her own arms were and embraced him stoutly, finding a mysterious deference in his very arms weaker than her own, since his muscles had been shattered with a piece of ragged shell.

She wondered if he were not perhaps, after all, the one she sought. He had been a hero once and that was once more than most of the men had been.

She knew love well. She had been embraced of many men, and kissed by not a few. There was a radiant peace in Malcolm's arms, a beatitude that promised to be lasting. She gazed at him in the azure twilight and seemed to see his soul and to find it beautiful. Dark

as it was, he found her eyes with his lips and kissed them shut, murmuring:

"I love you! I lo——"

"You're under arrest!"

The alien voice had the teeth of a saw and its snarl. And Malcolm felt in the back of his neck a cold steel circle that was the very O of death.

He let his arms fall away limply from Varue and her eyes flashing open saw back of him a man who was so tall that though he stood on the ground he loomed above her. Even as she gaped and Malcolm craned his neck against the pistol barrel to see who spoke, the shadow was dimly broken with a shield of silvered metal and the voice croaked:

"There's my badge."

She heard him open the door of the car and order Malcolm to hop out. Malcolm was grinning stupidly, almost giggling with his contemptible discomfiture. He backed out awkwardly and the Badge Bandit growled:

"Shell out!"

Malcolm went through his pockets, emptied his loose change into the bandit's left palm, put in his watch and spilled the chain on top of it, and after a prod from the muzzle of the pistol, produced a wallet none too plump and handed it over.

The ruffian, whom Varue was studying with intense curiosity and an uncanny dread, felt himself cheated by the modesty of Malcolm's wealth. He grumbled: "You ain't worth stickin' up. For two cents I'd bust your ugly conk."

"Oh, don't hurt him!" Varue pleaded. "He was wounded in the war and he hasn't been able to earn much money."

"Is 'at so! Well, how's you?"

There was such a loathsome caress in his tone and in his glance that for the first time Varue realized what was before her. She saw herself in the place of his other victims and remembered that the gossips had had no more mercy on them than the bandit. Her heart seemed to turn a somersault and then flop over.

Malcolm groaned and horror shocked his muscles so that the bandit turned to him and commanded: "Step back across the ditch, you! And don't make no false moves or I'll kill you!"

Malcolm retreated a little and paused in the irresolution of one of his trances. The bandit had to force him back step by step until he was on the other side of a tiny rivulet glistening along the gutter by the side of the road.

Then the bandit, still keeping an eye on Malcolm, leaned into the car toward Varue

and putting out his hand, snapped his fingers.

Hoping for a moment that she could bribe him to let her go, Varue stripped her fingers of their unimportant rings, ripped from her ears a pair of inexpensive pendants and unfastened a small brooch at her throat. The bandit stuffed them into his pocket and put out his hand for more. She said:

"That's all I have."

His eyes ran about her and discovering a little necklace and a locket hanging down inside her frock, fumbled for the chain with lingering interest and hesitated a moment with his ghastly hand on her cringing flesh.

Then, with a sudden satyr-like noise, he shifted the pistol to his left hand, swung into the car, found the starter with his foot and set the engine to trembling with a terror like Varue's. She tried to break through the door at her side, but his right arm thrust her over in a heap. He slammed the door shut, pushed in the clutch and set the gear in low.

A loose monkey-wrench in the bottom of the car got in his way and he kicked it aside against Varue's ankle. But she did not feel the pain in her greater agony of fear. She cried out in protest as the car bucked and started, and knocked the gear-shift back to neutral.

The sound of her voice set Malcolm's gears in mesh and he dashed across the little water and flung himself on the running board. The bandit's right hand caught the pistol from his left and aimed it at Malcolm. But Varue seized his elbow and dragged it back and the bullet went into the sky. With the same wrench she threw the wheel around so that the car, like a stupid horse, turned its head to the ditch and stopped.

The bandit freed himself from Varue's clutch by a backward slash of his elbow that struck her in the chest with the force of a dull bayonet. By this time Malcolm had grasped the bandit by the right wrist and the throat. As the bandit tried to rise and shake him loose, Malcolm dragged him through the door, whose weak lock failed to hold.

And now the bandit, far taller and bulkier than Malcolm, threw all his weight upon him and they went down in the weeds with a crash that took the breath from the soldier.

The bandit struck at Malcolm and his big left fist grazed his jaw as he twisted his head aside. The bandit's horrible fingers struggled to reach the boy's eyes and gouge them out. With all his might Malcolm held back that grisly spider, while keeping off the pistol with his other hand.

Varue, paralyzed with fear, watched and wrung her hands like the girl in the movies. But she was not so much afraid as rapt with wonderment at the lovable sacrifice of Malcolm, who drew the murderer upon himself for her sake. She was falling in love with this new Malcolm.

Then, with a sudden contortion, the bandit worried to his knees and stood erect. As he steadied himself to aim his pistol at Malcolm, the boy seized his foot and twisted him off his balance. But the pistol was coming round to end the matter when Varue, with a sense of wifeliness, joined her heart's husband in their common cause and flung herself from the car at the bandit's arm.

As she clutched he fired, and the dust smoked up in the weeds alongside Malcolm's heart. Before he could fire again Varue hung all her weight on his arm and dragged it down and, though the bandit turned to throttle her, she sank her teeth into his wrist so viciously that he let the pistol drop. She kicked it and it splashed into the little rivulet, tossing up silver spray with the sound of a diving frog.

Before the bandit could seize Varue, Malcolm had brought him down again upon himself. But now the bandit's hands were free and they went straight to Malcolm's throat and bur-

rowed deep in the flesh in spite of Malcolm's frenzied battle against suffocation.

Varue, weeping and frantic, could not find a place to intervene. Her hands beat together futilely till a croaking death-rattle from Malcolm so startled her that she buried one hand in the bandit's heavy hair and dragged his head back. As his face came up into the moonlight and bared his long throat, she gave him a ferocious cut across his Adam's Apple with the side of her hand.

An uncouth howl issued from his awful pain and he went over on his side. But Malcolm was too weak to move.

While Varue looked about for some weapon of further offense, a stone, a club or something, anything, the bandit rose with the burly fury of a grizzly and made after her. She backed away in terror, but did not dare to flee down the lonely road. She did not want to run away. For all her terror she would rather die than abandon that poor young man who for all his terror had been willing to die rather than abandon her to the mercies of the beast.

She ran round and round the car, trying to remember what she had once learned of self-protection. The brute strode after in pursuit. At last she recalled one lesson and hastily slipped her arms out of her light cloak and

suddenly turning, whipped it over his head.

While he buffeted about under it, she ran in close and lifting her knee, drove it into the pit of his stomach.

He yelped with excruiation and his hands dropped. Ruthless as a little demon settling down to the business of disabling an opponent who had no code to appeal to, she threw aside every tradition of delicacy, stepped forward again with her left foot between the bandit's drooping knees, stooped far over, seized the left hem of his trousers and giving a great hunch, threw the bewildered giant over on his face. Then she whirled and bent his left leg back at the knee till he whimpered in agony and terror. Just before she cracked the bone he pleaded:

"Oh— Oh—don't break it! I give in."

She ought to have broken it, but her primeval ferocity was hampered by long traditions of sportsmanship and she let him go, dropping down by the side of Malcolm, who was just coming back from death.

A shadow fell across his wan face and she looked up to see the bandit looming over her, rejoicing in her ridiculous mercy and her easy conquest.

As she rose and turned to escape his arms enveloped her and his hands met across her

breast. He began to drag her backward away, but she spun round inside his embrace and raising her hands like the talons of a swooping eagle, drew them down across his face and eyes and almost brought his eyeballs out of their bleeding lids. While he yowled in desperate rage she kicked him on the exquisitely tender shins with her sharp French heels and beat him on the nose and eyes with both fists; and her teeth ground the flesh of his fluttering hands and nearly brought off one ugly finger.

He was like a man who has closed with a wildcat and wishes he hadn't. He tore himself from her in a spasm of struggle and flung her off with such force that she went back against the car and sank into the embrasure of the open door.

She was breathing so hard that her body rose and fell as if across an invisible washing-board. She was nauseated with the disgust of her first encounter of flesh against flesh in hatred. Her legs were shaken so that her very knees chattered together.

She could not have run from him one step, though she saw that he was regaining his wind and his wrath and was gathering himself for a final rush that should overwhelm her utterly. His teeth gleamed through the blood from his eyes and mouth and the hideousness of him

was of itself a weapon beating down her resistance.

At his first lurch toward her, she huddled farther into the car and her hand touched the monkey wrench she had flung there carelessly in her haste to be off to the tennis games. It was a clumsy thing but divinely beautiful to her need, and when she brought it up over her head, her right hand met her left. As the Badge Bandit came forward she brought it down like a bludgeon on his skull.

It was so like cracking an egg that she sickened and slumped forward in a faint and slid to the ground.

Two automobiles went by but their drivers dared not stop. It was dangerous to stop for anything now-a-nights. Later, two officers of the police patrol, organized to prevent spooning and recently devoted to collecting cold evidence against the Badge Bandit, drove up and seeing Varue's car standing as idle as an empty-saddled war-horse on a battle-field, got out and advanced with pistols at the ready.

They found Malcolm Stone clutching at his throat and drowsily delighting in the luxury of a deep breath. They found Miss Varue Macready coming out of a coma and trying to decide which were her feet and which were her hands. And they found a total stranger lying

on his face in a puddle of dusty blood, apparently not delighting in anything or trying to decide anything.

Varue had proved her point that a girl who wants to—really wants to—can take care of herself. So she told Malcolm that he could take care of her from now on.

They both preferred to take their adventures vicariously for a while and they went to a movie—a rather tame one after their own experience. But it had, like many another, a scene in which a young man of diabolic wickedness is redeemed to perfect virtue by an operation on his skull.

"It would be nice if this Badge Bandit should come out of the hospital and join the Y. M. C. A. as a result of my nifty work with the little monkey wrench—wouldn't it, honey?"

"Very nice!" said Malcolm. "Very nice indeed! After all, we owe it to him that we are sending out invitations."

THE END

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